

The Relationship Between The Coaches' Leadership Style towards The Emotions And Behavior of Athletes At The Malaysian School Sports Council (MSSM), Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

Athletes' excellence is not solely dependent on the talent they possess but is closely related to the leadership style of their coach. A study was conducted to explore the coaching styles on the emotions and behaviors of athletes in the Malaysian School Sports Council, Kuala Lumpur. Understanding the impact of coaching styles on athlete performance and well-being is paramount for optimizing athletic development and success. By elucidating the role of coaching in shaping athlete emotions and behaviors, this study aims to inform effective coaching strategies and enhance athlete performance outcomes. A quantitative research approach utilizing a survey method was employed in this study. A total of 223 athletes representing Kuala Lumpur in the national-level championship were selected through simple random sampling. The Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) questionnaire and the Behavioral Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (BERQ) were administered to assess coaching styles and athlete emotions and behaviors, respectively. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, conducted using SPSS version 29, tested the research hypotheses at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The study findings revealed a significant relationship between coaching styles and the emotions and behaviors of athletes. Quality leadership was found to provide effective motivation, clear guidance, and tailored teaching, fostering a positive coach-athlete relationship essential for optimal athletic performance. Future research endeavors could explore longitudinal studies to examine the sustained effects of coaching styles on athlete development and performance outcomes. Additionally, investigating the impact of specific coaching interventions on athlete emotional regulation and behavior management could offer valuable insights for refining coaching practices and maximizing athlete potential. Overall, it is crucial for sports coaches to continually enhance their knowledge mastery to provide them with better capabilities in carrying out leadership tasks and positively influencing the developmental performance of the athletes they train.

Keywords: Leadership, Coaching, Emotion, Behavior, LSS, BERQ

Introduction

The influence of coach leadership on athlete performance is crucial in the world of sports. Quality leadership can provide motivation, guidance, and proper instruction to athletes, ultimately aiding in improving their performance. Therefore, sports coaches need to continually enhance their knowledge mastery to be more capable in carrying out their tasks. This study discusses coach leadership in effectively managing their responsibilities. According to Pilus & Saadan (2009), there are three distinct components of coaching behavior, including the leader's actual behavior, the required leader's behavior, and the preferred leader's behavior. In the development process of athletes in a sport, coaches play a direct and pivotal role. Their primary responsibility is to train athletes and teams participating in any competition. Coaches are seen as individuals who can shape effective training for the athletes they train.

Each coach must have their own leadership and coaching style that aligns with the athletes. Leadership is the leader's style in providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. According to Chelladurai & Saleh (1980), effective coaching behavior varies depending on specific contexts when the characteristics of athletes and established situations change. The sporting situation context and the characteristics of both coaches and athletes determine the appropriate leadership behavior. There are various leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic, social support, and training and directive. Paterson (2005) states that the coach's leadership style can influence the achievements of athletes and the performance of a formed team.

Furthermore, an essential aspect of leadership is internal and external factors that have influenced individuals and teams in the process of achieving goals. Input and output factors will affect each other. The progress of athletes in training and skills is a factor that affects the leader. Agrawal et al (2012) found that better leadership styles influence team effectiveness and demand team development. Therefore, great coaching and leadership styles will be chosen by athletes to guide them in achieving their goals. Athletes have the opportunity to make choices in line with their preferences.

Background of the Study

Coaching in sports is a complex and challenging field that combines elements of art and science. Researchers have suggested that coaching integrates scientific knowledge and methods, applied through the talent of the coach (Gambetta, 2007). In addition to being responsible for training athletes, the role of coaches is now seen more broadly, involving the positive shaping of adolescents and youth (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007). This underscores the importance of coaches in shaping the personality, character, and integrity of athletes. For coaches to positively influence athletes' personalities and characters, they need to be exemplary role models. The behavior and attitudes of coaches, not only during training and competitions but also outside these contexts, impact the development of athletes (Stewart & Owens, 2011).

Key aspects of coaching behavior include training quality improvement, relationships with athletes, and environmental influence. However, there are still challenges in comprehensively assessing the success and effectiveness of coaches (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002). Studies indicate that athlete satisfaction is closely related to positive coaching behavior, not solely based on team achievement (Baker et al., 2003). Therefore, positive coaching behavior plays

a crucial role in influencing athlete performance. The Sports Leadership Scale has been used in research to explore the relationship between coaching behavior and team performance, indicating that coaching behavior significantly impacts overall team performance (Stewart & Owens, 2011).

Coaches also need to master various aspects, including management and relationship skills, in addition to coaching technical skills. Using suitable instruments, quantitative data on coaching behavior can be collected and analyzed to provide more detailed feedback to coaches, assisting them in enhancing their coaching skills. Sports coaching is a continually evolving field, always seeking ways to improve athlete performance and positively shape them.

Problem Statement

The coach is a leader who serves as the backbone of an athlete's or team's success. Meanwhile, sports represent a branch that can elevate the reputation of schools and countries on both national and global levels. In Malaysia, sports-related news consistently captures the attention of our sports enthusiasts. Every achievement by athletes in any championship is eagerly anticipated. For example, the success achieved by the national sprinter, Muhammad Azeem Fahmi, illustrates the dedicated efforts of both the athlete and the coach in enhancing performance in sports. Referring to a report by Berita Harian on August 2, 2022, the 18-year-old runner from Ipoh, Perak, displayed an 'extraordinary' performance at the World Junior Sports Championship in Cali, Colombia, setting a national record with a time of 10.09 seconds. However, can aspiring athletes maintain a consistent level of performance even as the facilities and sports equipment become more sophisticated day by day. According to Ekuri (2018), the success of various sports programs also depends on the quality and quantity of facilities and sports equipment provided. Coaches are crucial individuals who need to understand the needs and desires of athletes to ensure that they perform at their best in both training and competitions. As Loh (2014) emphasizes, the behavior of coaches during training and competitions plays a significant role in motivating an individual player to succeed. Furthermore, several factors closely relate to the athlete-coach relationship, including the interaction among athletes, coaches, and the environment. This interaction can influence the athlete's perception, and, in turn, the coach's perception is influenced by the attitudes of their athletes. This explains the strong influence coaches have on their athletes in terms of development and sports performance (Cote et al., 1999).

Coaching is indeed a complex field, and the role of a good coach is crucial in training athletes not only in terms of physical and technical aspects but also in motivation, emotional relationships, and personal development (Walach-Bista 2014). To achieve athlete satisfaction and excellent performance, coaches need to understand the needs and desires of athletes (Chelladurai et al. 1997). A close emotional relationship between the coach and the athlete also has a significant impact on athlete performance. However, there is an issue where many coaches train with styles and behaviors they feel are suitable without assessing the actual effects on the athletes in terms of their perceptions (Stewart & Owens, 2011). Research on coaching behavior in the country is crucial to measure the impact and effectiveness of the approaches used by coaches. Additionally, coaching behavior differs for child and adult athletes, as well as athletes of different genders and sports types (Dotan et al., 2012). Coaches need to tailor training to the physical development and preferences of the athlete to achieve success. There are also differences between individual and team athlete training, with

individual sports emphasizing technical skills, while team sports emphasize physical training and strategic planning (Arnason et al., 2004).

Research on coaching behavior in Malaysia is still limited and requires attention. By conducting this study, it can help improve the understanding of the effectiveness of coaching approaches in the country and enable coaches to take more appropriate and effective actions in guiding their athletes. Therefore, research on coaching behavior is essential to help understand and enhance the coach-athlete relationship, leading to improved athlete performance in sports. According to Ismail et al (2020), coaches must have a high level of competence. This is because a coach must always be sensitive to their athletes. Ismail et al (2020) also state that competence is the foundation of trust between coaches and athletes. Therefore, to develop the leadership capabilities of a coach, they need to be more aware of how they lead, and it all starts with themselves. However, coach behavior not only influences during training and competitions but also when not training or outside the sports arena. The interaction and relationship between coaches and their athletes outside of training time also affect athlete development (Stewart & Owens, 2011). Therefore, a study aiming to investigate the differences in coaching behavior towards athletes is crucial to understand a more comprehensive impact.

Furthermore, understanding the needs and desires of athletes is also a crucial aspect of coaching (Chelladurai et al., 1997). Coaches who can take into account and understand the individual needs of athletes can enhance athlete satisfaction and performance overall. Coaches who are sensitive to the needs of athletes may be more effective in motivating and guiding their athletes (Horn et al., 2011). By conducting this study, it will provide a deeper insight into how coaching behavior differs according to the type of athletes and different sports. The results of this study can guide coaches in improving their interaction and relationship with their athletes and enhance athlete performance through more appropriate and relevant approaches. In the face of the complexity of coaching, in-depth research and understanding of coaching behavior and its relationship with athletes are crucial for holistic sports development. By considering the needs and desires of athletes and improving their interaction and relationship with them, coaches can help motivate and shape athletes to become better, both in terms of sports performance and personal development. Additionally, when managing a team, whether at the school, district, or state level, a coach is not only a team manager but should also have a unique coaching behavior. The behavior and job satisfaction of coaches are motivational factors for athlete achievement, satisfying athletes to achieve excellence in their competitions.

Research Objective

In general, this study aims to identify differences in coaching styles and examine the relationship between coaching styles and the behavior and emotions of athletes in the Malaysian School Sports Council (MSSM) in Kuala Lumpur. The objectives are detailed as follows:

- a. To identify the types of coaching leadership styles among coaches in the Malaysian School Sports Council, Kuala Lumpur.

- b. To identify the relationship between coaching leadership styles in the Malaysian School Sports Council (MSSM), Kuala Lumpur towards the emotions and behavior of athletes.

Literature Review

The study on leadership is an essential aspect in contemporary literature, involving the relationship between a leader and followers. Leadership entails the leader-follower engagement aimed at collaboratively achieving their goals towards success in their chosen field. Almansour (2012) states that the process of individual change and transformation reflects one's leadership. Harper (2012) further suggests that this process includes altering needs, values, self-concept, and team goals. Leaders must exemplify the required tasks and values, demonstrating behavior to fulfill the organizational vision. Contemporary society places significant emphasis on leadership styles, as follower development is influenced by the coach. Followers require guidance, incentives, motivation, and training from their leader. Leadership style is largely influenced by organizational culture, and behavior patterns have been utilized by coaches to complete tasks within an organization. The commonly identified leadership styles include democratic, autocratic, supportive, and coaching and directive styles (Abbas et al., 2012).

Coaches apply their efforts in a specific style aligned with particular goals. They have their own goals to be achieved through their guidance. Awan & Mahmood's (2010) previous study suggests that the leader's performance determines the group's performance. In human karma, the distance between the leader and followers remains constant, meaning better leader performance will yield better results. Autocratic leaders are seen to exhibit behaviors such as ruling, forcing, and crisis management skills. They tend to be centralized and control followers without any bias (Lin & Foo, 2012). Furthermore, interactions between diverse groups and cultures can enhance the understanding between leaders and followers (Harper, 2012). A systematic democratic leadership style can influence a leader's behavior to attract subordinates' interest. Lam & O'Higgins (2012) state that effective leaders are those who seek potential follower motives, strive to fulfill higher needs, and fully engage followers. Democratic leadership can motivate followers to improve performance and succeed at work. This is evident when leaders have better relationships with followers, athletes, and subordinates. Moreover, Lam & O'Higgins (2012) found that positive relationships can enhance better communication between coaches and athletes to achieve goals. The ability to interact with followers is an effective way to improve behavioral styles in managing a group (Amagoh, 2009).

Furthermore, coaching behavior leading to greater empowerment and concern for the team's efforts requires effective team collaboration. Social support provided by team members may influence others' performance to demonstrate better achievements and be well-coordinated (Tuuli, 2012). Exchanging rewards for achievements may attract athletes' attention. Leaders may meet the highest-level athletes' needs by appealing to their moral values (Wells & Peachey, 2011). Additionally, according to Harper (2012), leaders act as examples to gain followers' trust and confidence through guidance. The leader's ability to provide instruction can inspire athletes, enabling them to achieve their goals. As coaches, they will consistently motivate their athletes to work hard in mastering every skill during training.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework refers to the concepts and theories that serve as the foundation for conducting a study. In the context of the study on coaching leadership styles, four main leadership theories are used as the basis for the research. These four theories are autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, coaching and directive leadership style, and social support leadership style. All of these leadership styles are employed to explore the preferred coaching leadership style among athletes in the Malaysian School Sports Council (MSSM), Kuala Lumpur.

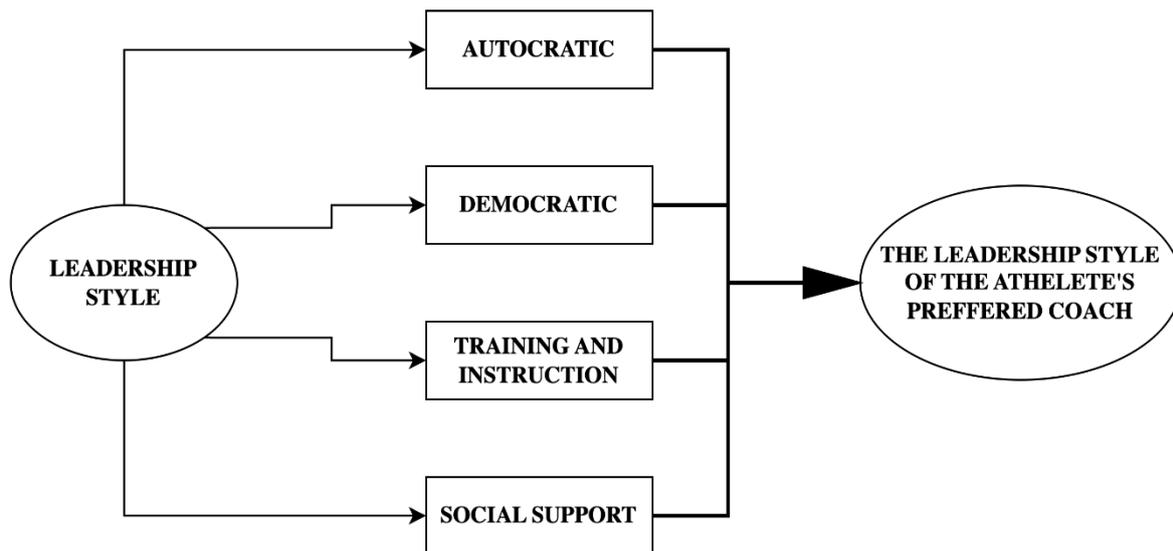


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Methods of the Study

This study is quantitative and a comparative research designed to examine the relationship between the variables studied, focusing on coaching leadership styles and athletes' behavior and emotions. The population of the study comprises athletes representing Kuala Lumpur in the national-level competitions. Due to the large size of the athlete population, a simple random sampling procedure is used. According to Chua (2011), a simple random sampling procedure ensures that each unit or subject has an equal chance of being selected as a respondent. In this study, the sampling procedure follows the guidelines provided by Krejcie and Morgan. There are 500 athletes representing Kuala Lumpur in the Malaysian School Sports Council (MSSM) at the national level in various selected sports. A total of 223 respondents were selected to meet the guidelines specified in Krejcie and Morgan's table.

The instrument used in this study is the *Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS)* questionnaire Chelladurai & Saleh (1980), consisting of 35 Likert-scale questions. This instrument measures four dimensions of coaching leadership styles: coaching and directive (13 questions), democratic (9 questions), autocratic (5 questions), and social support (8 questions). The reliability of the questionnaire ranges from .59 to .85, while the validity ranges from .75 to .90 (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Rengasamy et al., 2013). Additionally, the study involves a questionnaire about athletes' emotions and behavior, drawn from the *Behavioral Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (BERQ)*. This questionnaire assesses an individual's behavioral style

or strategy in responding to stress to regulate emotions. It can be administered to individuals aged 12 and above, consisting of 20 items measured using a Likert scale.

Furthermore, before distributing the questionnaire to respondents, the researcher first presented the questionnaire to experts for validation and language accuracy, as the questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Malaysia. After completion, all data were processed using the SPSS version 29, and the final report was generated to produce a comprehensive research report.

Findings

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of Coaching Leadership Style

Leadership Style	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training And Instruction	223	29.00	65.00	55.7713	7.13365
Democratic	223	13.00	45.00	29.6906	6.06632
Social Support	223	11.00	40.00	28.1121	5.75091
Autocratic	223	5.00	25.00	11.2197	4.34660
Valid N (listwise)	223				

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis indicate a considerable variation in the responses given by respondents regarding the four observed coaching leadership styles. For the coaching leadership style "Coaching and Directive," the range value from 29.00 to 65.00 reflects a wide variation in the coaching and directive leadership style, with a mean of 55.77 and a standard deviation of 7.13. The coaching leadership style "Autocratic" has a range value from 5.00 to 25.00, with a mean of 11.22 and a standard deviation of 4.35, indicating a relatively low variation. Similarly, the coaching leadership style "Democratic" shows a range value between 13.00 and 45.00, with a mean of 29.69 and a standard deviation of 6.07, suggesting a moderate variation. Meanwhile, the level of the coaching leadership style "Social Support" has a range value between 11.00 and 40.00, with a mean around 28.11 and a standard deviation of approximately 5.75, indicating variation in the social support coaching leadership style. With a valid sample size (N) of 223, this analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the distribution and characteristics for each coaching leadership style.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation of Coaching Leadership Style With Emotions And Behavior

		Coaching Leadership Style	Behavior And Emotions
Coaching Leadership Style	Pearson Correlation	1	.975**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	223	223
Behavior And Emotions	Pearson Correlation	.975**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	223	223

** . Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 2, the Pearson Correlation analysis between coaching leadership styles and emotions and behaviors indicates a significant relationship between these two variables. In this context, the Pearson Correlation value between coaching leadership styles and emotions and behaviors is 0.975**. This positive value indicates a positive relationship between coaching leadership styles and emotions and behaviors. Therefore, the better the coaching leadership styles, the higher the level of emotions and behaviors of athletes. Furthermore, the reported significant value (Sig.) as $<.001$ suggests that the relationship between coaching leadership styles and emotions and behaviors is statistically significant. Thus, the ** sign on the correlation value indicates that this relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), signifying a high level of confidence in this correlation result. Therefore, in the context of this study, there is a significant relationship between coaching leadership styles and the emotions and behaviors of athletes, which can be positively influenced and observed.

Discussion

This study demonstrates a significant relationship between coaching leadership styles and athletes' emotions and behavior. The high and positive correlation values suggest that effective coaching leadership styles are closely related to increased positive emotions and good behavior among athletes. These findings underscore the crucial role of coaches in influencing athletes' emotional experiences and behaviors. Coaches are not only technical instructors but also leaders who play a role in shaping athletes' attitudes and emotions.

Furthermore, democratic leadership styles and social support show a positive relationship with athletes' emotions and behavior. This indicates that involving athletes in decision-making processes and providing social support can lead to better performance and positive emotional states. Additionally, these findings align with previous literature, highlighting that coaching leadership styles can impact athletes' motivation and performance. Democratic leadership and social support have been associated with athlete satisfaction and higher achievement.

Emphasizing the importance of positive coaching leadership styles indicates a significant impact on overall athlete development. Coaches not only act as sports instructors but also as caregivers influencing athletes' emotional and behavioral development. In this context, this study presents challenges and opportunities for leadership development among coaches. Increasing awareness and understanding of effective leadership styles can help coaches play their roles more effectively.

Although these findings offer valuable insights, further research may be needed to explore other factors that could influence the relationship between coaching leadership styles and athletes' emotions and behavior. The results of this study have implications for coach training and development programs. Coaches and sports leaders need to understand the impact of their leadership styles on athletes and align their leadership approaches with athletes' needs and preferences. Overall, this discussion underscores the importance of the coach's role in shaping athletes' experiences and how their leadership styles can lead to positive outcomes in the context of athletes' emotions and behavior.

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