Assessment of Coaches Leadership Behaviour and Preference by Athletes in Individual and Team Sports in Nigeria

Ali, Isa Danlami
Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Abstract
This study examined coaching leadership behaviour preference by athletes in individual and team sports that will lead to increased satisfaction and performance. The ex-post facto research design was employed since the design is based on existing information which could not be manipulated. A validated self-structured questionnaire containing six items was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was validated through face validity and was subjected to a reliability test of Cronbach reliability coefficient at .839, Spearman-Brown at .793 while .787 was obtained for Guttman Split-Half , the result obtained showed the reliability of the instrument for the study. A total of nine hundred and sixty questionnaire was distributed to athletes in the selected States Sports Councils using the random sampling procedure. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The two samples Z-test were used to test the various hypotheses. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings of the study revealed the following: Athletes in team sports have higher preferences for coaches with instructional dispositions and were significantly different from their counterparts in individual sports. On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made: Coaches should set goals that are compatible with athletes' instructional abilities. Coaches should motivate their athletes even when they commit mistakes while receiving instructions. These behaviours should be adopted by coaches for increase in athletes' satisfaction and enhancement in performance.

Keywords*:* Behaviour, Instruction, Leadership, Preference

Introduction

Overtime leadership has been defined in terms of individual traits, leaders behaviour, interactions pattern, role relationships, follower perception, influence over followers, influence on task goals, and influences on organizational culture (Yukl, 2002).Barrow (2007) defined leadership as "the behaviour process that influences individuals and groups towards set goals". The definition encompasses many dimensions of leadership which include decision-making processes, motivational techniques, giving feedback, establishing interpersonal relationships and directing the group or team confidently (Weinberg & Gould, 2003). Leadership is described by Jones (2003) as the quality of getting members to think and behave in the same way as the leader and getting them to agree that the leader's way is the right path to follow.

According to Cole (2003) leadership occurs when one individual in a group influences the other group members to contribute voluntarily in a given situation. Cole (2003) further suggested that leadership is something more than just personality, accident or appointment. According to John Powell, who rose through the American army to become U.S. Secretary of State, stated that leadership requires moral, physical, mental and spiritual coverage (Harari, 2002).

There are numerous dimensions of leadership behaviours that a coach can draw from that are sensitive to the situation, sporting activity and skill level of the athlete. The following are the six behaviour dimensions of leadership. They include autocratic, democratic, positive feedback, social support, training and instruction, and situational consideration.

Autocratic leadership:

The use of commands and punishments in autocratic leadership are prevalent in the prescription of plans and methods for activities. With autocratic leadership, a coach or trainer will map out a plan with very little, if any, input from the athlete. The autocratic behaviour dimension is a prime example of a coach or trainer giving the athlete what the coach or trainer thinks her/his needs. Autocratic leadership limits the involvement of its participants in decision making.

Democratic Leadership:

Democratic leadership allows for the participation of athletes in decisions, and coaches are respectful of their rights. Under this dimension, athletes or clients are allowed to set their own goals and are permitted to provide input about their training program. According to Coach Wooden, coaches should "consider the rights of others before their own feelings and the feelings of others before their own rights" (ESPN 2010). This form of leadership engages the athletes or clients that they are working with, making them feel needed and important.

Positive Feedback:

Positive feedback is based upon a behaviourist approach and is also known as positive reinforcement (Zhang 1997). Coaches and personal trainers will compliment or reward their athletes on their successes, which maintains motivational levels (Mageau 2003; Zhang 1997). The athlete or client will be rewarded for a good performance or effort (Zhang 1997).

Social Support:

The dimension of social support, which is a humanistic style, satisfies the interpersonal needs of athletes by remaining sensitive to them and helping them with their personal problems (Zhang 1997). A high degree of emotional intelligence (Goleman 1998), specifically empathy or having the ability to understand the emotional make up of people and treating them according to their emotional reactions, will be required to effectively carry out this dimension (Zhang 1997; Goleman 1998).

Instruction:

This dimension focuses on explaining the techniques of the exercises and the tactics of the drills, provides rationale as to why these new concepts are being implemented and worked on. Instruction is utilized to strengthen the athlete's skill set hence a strength coach may help refine an athlete's Olympic lifting technique or a personal trainer may guide his client through some mobility drills or flexibility exercises that were just introduced (Mageau, 2003).

Situational Consideration Behaviours:

Coaching behaviour aimed at considering situational factors such as time, games, environment, maturity state, individual, gender, skill levels and health conditions. Fiedler (2002) model of leadership effectiveness, shows there are three important dimensions of leadership effectiveness; 1) leader-member relations 2) task structure and 3) power position. Fiedler (2002) emphasized the importance of situational factors in influencing the effectiveness of leaders. Fiedler contends that good leaders are flexible and they adopt their coaching behaviours to situational factors. Dale and Jody (2002) suggested that the expectations for

situational leadership need to be developed. Chelladurai and Carron (1978) state that, if a coach adapts his/her behaviour to comply with athletes' preferred behaviours, the athlete may be more readily inclined to the coach through an improved satisfaction and performance. Preferred leader behaviour refers to actual behaviours favoured by athletes and athletes' perceptions of leader behaviour are similar to required leader behaviour.

Generally, we may distinguish leaders as more or less task-oriented or people-oriented (Hillel, 2006). In sport we usually distinguish between two types of coaches - autocratic and democratic. The democratic coach is more athletes than task-oriented. The coaches of this type are more supportive, more instructive and more ready to reinforce, encourage and give positive feedback information to their athletes than other coaches, thus increasing their athletes' sense of competence, independence, satisfaction and self- esteem (Chelladurai, 1993; Reimer & Toon, 2001). They employ a less controlling leadership style, allow their athletes to participate in the decision- making processes, and encourage them to solve some problems by themselves that may appear during practice or competition. Sometimes, they consult with athletes and then make decisions by themselves. The democratic coaches approach their athletes more individually, and their personal care of athletes is more obvious. They care about conflicts in the team, and try to help athletes to solve them. The democratic coach is more oriented towards athletes as people and interested in good interpersonal relationships, whereas he/she is less oriented towards outcomes, results, or winning. In the case of a failure the democratic coach will first talk to athletes trying to analyse their performance and trying even to comfort them. For the democratic coach all athletes are precious and all contribute to the team's success. Consequently, athletes perceive such a coach as a parent, a teacher or even a friend, and tend to have a close interpersonal relationship with him/her.

Autocratic coaches, on the other hand are more oriented towards task accomplishment and outcome than towards people; they are highly oriented towards results and winning. They are less supportive, less instructive and less rewarding (Reimer & Toon, 2001). They are more directives and use a more controlling leadership style, not allowing athletes' participation in decision-making. These coaches usually do not explain their actions; they solve problems and make decisions alone. In comparison to the democratic coaches, the autocratic coaches are less flexible, less innovative, and less ready to try new training or teaching methods. Also, autocratic coaches are not open to criticism and are highly self-confident. They influence athletes through their authoritative leadership, severe approach, and their position of power, demanding respect and obedience from their athletes. They often punish a bad performance failure or insufficient effort investment, but at the same time they might be very tolerant towards the high ability athletes who are treated like stars. Many autocratic coaches are ready to help or to give support to their athletes only in the case of severe problems (e.g. injuries, or illness). They are less ready to invest their capacities, time, etc. in less competent athletes who are considered as less important for the team. This type of behaviour will make the athletes lose confidence in the coach.

These types of leadership styles and behaviours displayed by those in positions of responsibility are seen as crucial to organizational success (Jones, 2003). A large body of literature from a number of diverse area including business and sports have found that those occupying positions (e.g. teachers, managers, and athletes) can influence the performance of members (Barrow, 2007). Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) reported that team sports athletes of interdependent sports preference for training and instruction was significantly greater than that of individual sport athletes of independent sports. In agreement with this report, House (2001) found that interdependent sport athletes preferred greater level of training and instructions.

Terry (2004) also shared similar opinion when he found that team sport athletes preferred significantly more training and instruction than individual sport athletes. In summary, democratic and autocratic style of leadership behaviours can both be good depending on the circumstances a coach finds himself.

Early leadership theories attributed leadership success to abilities such as tireless energy, extraordinary insight, and incredible persuasive powers. Harari (2002) reported that effective leaders possess such traits as physical vigor, eagerness to be given responsibility, high intelligence, strong people skills, a need for achievement, self-confidence, the ability to motivate others, honesty, assertiveness, courage, determination, good understanding of others needs and desires, and the ability to be flexible. Hundreds of studies have investigated these mystifying qualities. However, this immense research effort has failed to identify any traits that guarantee leadership success (Yukl, 2002).

Although many factors help determine outcomes in sports, coaches have a direct influence on players, their attitudes and athletic performance. Athletes perceive and interpret their athletic experience based on the leadership they receive, as well as their ability to perform well. Coaches can have a huge impact on athletes' personal lives and goals and how they perceive themselves and their community. Individual athletes look to coaches for leadership and encouragement beyond the sports environment, and this also carries over to athletic performance

Null Hypothesis

Is there any significant difference between individual and team sport athletes in their preference for coach with instructional leadership behaviours?

Methodology

The ex-post facto research design was used for this study. It is useful in collecting and analyzing data from a large number of individuals in a relatively short period of time. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 80 respondents from each of (10) from each of the states sports council across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria giving us a total of 908 athletes out of a population of 960. The selection was done through random sampling. This sample size is in line with Morgan and Krejcie, (1970) as well as Bello and Ajayi (2000), in determining a sample size of a given population beyond one hundred thousand (100000). The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire developed by Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) and was adopted and adapted by the researcher to reflect the Nigerian situation. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section ''A'' comprised of statements which on the demographic information of the respondents and Section ''B'' contained modified and revised leadership scale for sports (MRLSS). Each sub-section describes a specific coaching behaviour. The researcher with the help of six research assistants' adequately trained in the administration of questionnaire, administered (960) and retrieved 908 completed questionnaire. The two way samples Z-test were used to test the various hypotheses postulated. This procedure (z-test) allows an observed mean score to be compared with a fixed mean which will indicate whether the observed mean is significantly in agreement or disagreement. An alpha level of significance of 0.05 was used to retain or reject the hypotheses. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyse the data collected. The Z-test was used to test the preferred leader behaviour by individual and team sport athletes.

Results and Discussion

Null Hypothesis

Is there any significant difference between individual and team sport athletes in their preference for coach with training and instruction leadership behaviours?

Table 1: Two Sample Z-test on Preference for Coaches with Instructional Leadership Behaviours by Individual and Team Sports Athletes.

Coded sports	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Z-calc.	DF	P	Z-critical
Team sports	4.36	0.471	0.019	2.619	906	0.009	1.96
Individual sports	4.27	0.505	0.028				

(Z-critical = 1.96, P < 0.05)

Table 1 above showed that the two groups of athletes are significantly different in their preference rating for coaches with training and instruction leadership behaviours. This is indicated in the Table with an observed Z-calculated value of 2.619 at the 906 degree of freedom and the observed significant level of 0.009 ((P < 0.05). This means that the null hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between individual and team sport athletes in their preference for a coach with instructional leadership behaviours in Nigeria is rejected. However, the mean scores of the two groups clearly indicated that both athletes have high preference for coaches with instructional leadership behaviours. The observed significant difference is therefore on the degree of rating in the preference of athletes from the team sports.

Discussion of Findings

Significant difference in the preference for coaches with dispositions for instructions by the athletes in the team and individual sports was tested. The results of the test revealed significant difference between the two groups. Though the scores revealed that the athletes in the two groups have high preference for coaches with this behavioural disposition but significant difference was observed in the two groups. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Conclusion

There was significance alternate in the preference for coaches with dispositions for training and instructions by athletes in the team and individual sports. Athletes in team sports have higher preferences for coaches with training and instructions dispositions and were significantly different from their counterpart in individual sports. In a study of how leaders become and the effect of their behavior on group cohesion in individual and team sports, it was found that the greatest group cohesion results from leadership behavior which exceeds in training and instructions. Male athletes' preferred more training and instructions than the female athletes in a research conducted on hockey players.

Recommendations

1. Coaches should set goals that are compatible with athletes training abilities.
2. Coaches should motivate their athletes even when they commit mistakes during training.

3. Different drills should be used by coaches to enable the athletes have good knowledge of the sports they are taking part in.
4. Specific periods for practice should be defined by the coach.

References

Barrow, J.C. (2007). The Variables of Leadership. Academy of Management *Review, 2*, 231-   251.

Bello, O.I. & Ajayi, A. O. (2000). Organisation of sports in Nigerian Universities. *Proceedings of Guinness. NUGA Sports Clinic.* Ibadan.

Chelladurai, P. (1999). *Human resource management in sport and recreation*. Champaign. IL: Human Kinetics.

Chelladurai, P. & Saleh, S.D., (1978) Dimensions of Leader Behaviour in Sports: Development   of a Leadership Scale, *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 1980, 2, 34- 45.

Cole, G.A. (2003). Management Theory and Practice. Letts Educational. London DP Publication.

Harari, O. (2002). *The Leadership secrets of Collin Powell*. MaGraw Hill Professional, U.S.

Hillel, S. (2006). Leadership Styles and Leadership Changes in Human and Community   Service Organization. *Non Profit Leadership and Management*. 17(2) 179-194

House, J. (2001*). The Culture of Success.* New York. McGraw-Hill.

Jones, G. (2003). Performance excellence. A perspective on link between sport and business. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology,* 14, 268-281

Krejcie and Morgan, (1970). Determining Sample Size for a given population. *Sport Psychology*, Human Kinetics, Champaign IL., 2002, 309-354.

Riemer, H. A. & Toon, K.(2001). Leadership and Satisfaction in Tennis. Examination of Congruence, Gender and Ability*. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* , 22   (3), 243-256

Terry, P.C., (2004) The Coaching Preferences of Elite Athletes Competing at Universiade '83, *Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Sciences, 9, 201-208.*

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003).*Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (3rd Ed.) Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Yukl, G.A.(2002). Theory and Research on Leadership in Organisation. In M. D. Dunnette & L.   M. Hough (eds.) *Handbook of Industrial organizational Psychology 2nd edition*. Palo   Alto,   CA Consulting psychologists press 147-149.

Zhang, Z. F.   (1997). The development of leadership scale for sports. A study of coaches' leadership behaviour, 45-47, Taipei, Taiwan