

The Role of Leadership Styles in Enhancing Sports Performance Among Male High School Athletes

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the impact of various leadership styles on the school-level sports performance of male students. Understanding how leadership affects student-athletes is crucial, as it can significantly influence their motivation, personal growth, and overall performance in sports. To conduct this research, a survey questionnaire adapted from the Leadership Sports Scale (LSS) was employed within a descriptive correlational design. The sample consisted of 150 male students actively participating in school sports, allowing for a robust analysis of their experiences. Statistical methods, including Pearson's correlation coefficient, descriptive statistics, and multiple regression analysis, were utilized to assess the relationship between different leadership styles specifically autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire and sports performance, which served as the dependent variable. The results revealed that each leadership style exhibited a significant positive correlation with the performance of male student-athletes, highlighting the importance of effective leadership in sports. These findings suggest that the leadership style adopted by coaches at the school level plays a crucial role in determining their teams' overall effectiveness and success in competitions.

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Introduction

Success in sports depends a lot on leadership, especially in educational settings where young athletes are developing their character and skills. At the school level, students' athletic and personal development is primarily influenced by

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coaches and physical education teachers. Their leadership style has the latent to have an important impact on the outcomes of sporting events, affecting not only the performance of individual athletes but also the team's overall success. Leadership in sports refers to how a coach or team leader shapes the behaviour, attitudes, and performance of their team members to achieve a shared objective. According to Northouse (2001), leadership entails leading a group in the direction of achieving goals. In sports, these goals could include winning games, developing skills, or encouraging teamwork. In this process, a coach's multiple responsibilities include training, strategy creation, motivation, and conflict resolution. The athletes' performance, their level of motivation, and the cohesiveness of the team can all be significantly impacted by a coach's leadership style.

In sports psychology and management, there are three main types of leadership: autocratic, also known as dictatorial, democratic, and laissez-faire. The athletes they are designed to lead are impacted by each style in unique ways. A high concentration of control and decision-making authority in the coach's hands is characteristic of the autocratic style. This strategy is frequently utilized in environments where strict discipline is required and quick decision-making is essential, such as intense training sessions or competitive settings. However, this approach might not always be ideal for fostering a collaborative team environment or developing players' autonomy.

In contrast, the democratic approach involves delegating decision-making authority to team members. Athletes are more likely to participate, feel more involved, and be more committed when this approach is followed. Coaches who take a democratic approach frequently place a greater emphasis on cultivating interpersonal relationships among members of the team. This can lead to a group dynamic that is more cohesive and supportive.

The most hands-off approach is the laissez-faire style, in which the coach gives the athletes little direction and lets them make their own decisions. When working with athletes who have a lot of experience and are self-motivated, this approach can be effective. However, if the athletes lack the maturity or expertise to independently make informed decisions, this could result in problems.

Understanding how various leadership styles affect male students' performance is essential given the significance of leadership in sports, particularly in the early years of education. The purpose of this study is to investigate these connections in depth and provide information that coaches can use to implement the most effective leadership strategies for elevating school sports performance.

Objectives

For this study, the following goals were established:

- To ascertain the connection between the school-level sports performance of male students and three leadership styles—autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire.
- To investigate the predictive relationship between the outcome variable, male student sports performance, and leadership styles.

Hypotheses for the Study

The following hypotheses were formulated in light of the goals:

H1: The sports performance of male students in team sports is significantly correlated with leadership styles (autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire).

H2: There is a significant correlation between male students' team sports performance and their leadership styles.

Literature Analysis

There has been a lot of research done on leadership in sports, especially how it affects team dynamics, player motivation, and overall performance. According to previous studies (Northouse, 2001), various leadership styles can result in varying outcomes based on the context and characteristics of the athletes involved.

Autocratic Leadership

It has been found that situations requiring quick decision-making and strict discipline benefit from autocratic leadership, because of high degree of control and decision-making by the coach (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). However, it can also result in lower levels of player autonomy and satisfaction, which could hurt performance over time (Horn, 2008).

Democratic Leadership

According to Loughhead & Hardy (2020), democratic leadership involves athletes sharing decision-making responsibilities, which may result in increased levels of motivation, contentment, and commitment. According to Loughhead (2019), this style has been linked to positive outcomes in sports, particularly in terms of team cohesiveness and individual performance.

Laissez-faire Leadership

Coaches who allow athletes to make their own decisions and take a hands-off approach can be effective with mature and experienced athletes (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). However, if the athletes are not sufficiently self-motivated or knowledgeable, this style can also result in a lack of direction and decreased performance.

Impact on Performance

In a variety of contexts, the connection between leadership styles and sports performance has been investigated. The results consistently show that leadership style is a significant predictor of performance outcomes (Chelladurai, 1984;

Jowett & Poczwadowski, 2007). By focusing specifically on school-level male students, an underrepresented group in sports leadership research, this study adds to the existing body of research.

Methods for Research

Design of the Study

A descriptive correlational design was used in this study to investigate the connections between male school-level sports performance and leadership styles. According to Creswell (2014), A correlational design is appropriate for this study because it allows the investigation of relationships between variables without affecting the study environment.

Sampling and Population

360 male students from various schools made up the population for this study. Simple random sampling was used to select a 150-student sample. To increase the study's generalizability and ensure that everyone in the population had an equal chance of participating, this approach was chosen.

Tools and Equipment

The Leadership Sports Scale (LSS) was adapted into a survey questionnaire that was used to collect data. According to Chelladurai & Saleh (1980), the LSS is a well-established instrument in sports leadership research. Its purpose is to evaluate various dimensions of leadership styles as perceived by athletes. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability and validity, it underwent pilot testing before being adapted to the school setting.

Collecting Data

Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the participants for data collection. Based on their interactions with their school sports coaches, the students were instructed to complete the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the **Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27** was used for data analysis. The methods of analysis included:

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the questionnaire's internal consistency.

Descriptive Statistics

These are used to summarize the sample's demographics and the distribution of responses.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to investigate the connections between sports performance and leadership styles.

Multiple Regression Analysis

This method is used to find out how much leadership styles predict sports

performance.

Results

Statistical Descriptives

The participants were between the ages of 12 and 18, with a mean age of 15.5 (SD = 1.5) In the context of the study, the majority of participants had been participating in school sports for more than two years.

Analysis of Correlations

According to Pearson's correlation analysis, the sports performance of male students was significantly correlated with each of the three leadership styles i.e. autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. According to the correlation coefficients, democratic leadership had the strongest positive correlation with performance (r =.811, p.01), followed by autocratic leadership (r =.745, p.01), and laissez-faire leadership (r =.776, p.01).

Table 1: Correlation Between Leadership Styles and Sports Performance (n = 150)

Variable	Sports Performance	Autocratic Leadership	Democratic Leadership	Laissez-faire Leadership
Sports Performance	1.00	.745	.811	.776
Autocratic Leadership	.745	1.00	.645	.589
Democratic Leadership	.811	.645	1.00	.532
Laissez-faire Leadership	.776	.589	.532	1.00

Note: p < .01 (2-tailed)

Analysis of Multiple Regressions

The purpose of using multiple regression analysis in this study is to understand how different leadership styles (democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire) collectively influence sports performance among male students.

Multiple regression allows us to see how much each leadership style contributes to changes in sports performance while controlling for the effects of the other leadership styles.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Leadership Styles on Sports Performance

Leadership Style	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Democratic Leadership	0.460	3.87	< 0.001	Significant
Autocratic Leadership	0.242	2.24	< 0.001	Significant
Laissez-faire Leadership	0.204	1.64	< 0.001	Significant

Interpretation of the Results

Democratic Leadership ($\beta = .460, p < .001$)

Democratic leadership has the most significant positive impact on sports performance, with a standardized coefficient (β) of .460. This indicates that for every one standard deviation increase in democratic leadership, sports performance improves by .460 standard deviations.

The p-value (< .001) confirms that this result is statistically significant, meaning there's strong evidence that democratic leadership positively affects sports performance.

Autocratic Leadership ($\beta = .242, p < .001$)

Autocratic leadership also positively impacts sports performance but to a lesser extent than democratic leadership. A one-standard deviation increase in autocratic leadership is associated with a .242 standard deviation increase in sports performance.

The p-value (< .001) confirms that this relationship is statistically significant.

Laissez-faire Leadership ($\beta = .204, p < .001$)

Laissez-faire leadership has the least impact among the three, with a standardized coefficient of .204. This suggests that while laissez-faire leadership does influence sports performance, it is less effective compared to the other two styles. Again, the p-value (< .001) shows that this result is statistically significant.

t-value

The t-value is a statistic that helps determine whether the coefficient (β) for each independent variable (leadership styles) is significantly different from zero. A higher absolute t-value indicates that the corresponding leadership style has a significant impact on the dependent variable (sports performance). So, t-value for each leadership style is as under:

Democratic Leadership: $t = 3.87$; Autocratic Leadership: $t = 2.24$; Laissez-faire Leadership: $t = 1.64$

Model Summary (R² and Adjusted R²)**Table 3: Model Summary**

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error of the Estimate
0.766	0.587	0.583	1.14

R² (Coefficient of Determination): The R² value of .587 indicates that the combined leadership styles explain 58.7% of the variation in sports performance. This means that more than half of the changes in sports performance can be attributed to the type of leadership being employed.

Adjusted R²: The Adjusted R² of .583 is slightly lower than the R² (Coefficient of Determination). This adjustment accounts for the number of predictors in the model, giving a more accurate picture of how well the leadership styles explain the variation in sports performance when considering the number of variables.

Overall Interpretation

Balanced Leadership Style: The findings suggest that the most effective way to enhance sports performance is through a balanced leadership style that incorporates elements of both democratic and autocratic leadership.

Adaptability: The importance of adaptability in leadership is highlighted, as different situations and teams may require different approaches. For instance, some scenarios might benefit from the inclusion of more democratic principles, while others might need more autocratic control.

Key Insight: The significant influence of leadership styles on sports performance underscores the need for coaches and team leaders to carefully consider their approach to leading their teams.

Discussion

According to previous research (Weinberg & Gould, 2019), the significance of leadership in sports performance is underscored by this study's findings. Students' motivation and commitment to the team can be significantly increased by involving them in decision-making and fostering a collaborative environment, as evidenced by the strong positive relationship between democratic leadership and sports performance. This finding is in line with the findings of Vincer and Loughhead (2019), who discovered that democratic leadership is linked to greater levels of team cohesiveness and individual contentment. Even though autocratic leadership had less effect than democratic leadership, there was a significant positive correlation between sports performance and autocratic leadership. This finding indicates that an autocratic approach can be advantageous in certain circumstances, particularly those requiring discipline and quick decision-

making.

However, the coach should carefully manage this style's potential drawbacks, such as less player autonomy and satisfaction. Even though it is generally regarded as less effective in many contexts, the laissez-faire leadership style still demonstrated a positive correlation with sports performance. The maturity and self-motivation of the student-athletes in the study may be the source of this result. However, this method might not work for athletes who need more structure and direction, especially younger or less experienced players.

Overall, this study's findings suggest that the most effective strategy for improving school sports performance may be a balanced approach to leadership that incorporates aspects of both autocratic and democratic styles. The leadership style of coaches ought to be flexible and adaptable, taking into account the particular requirements of their team and the context of the sport.

Practical Implications

This study's findings have several practical implications for school coaches and educators:

Adaptability

Coaches should be able to change the way they lead because they know that different situations might call for different approaches.

Collaboration

Student-athlete motivation and performance can be improved by encouraging collaboration and participation in decision-making.

Balanced Approach

The best strategy for improving team performance may be a balanced approach that incorporates aspects of democratic and autocratic leadership.

Constraints and Prospective Research

This study has some limitations, but it offers valuable insights into how leadership styles affect sports performance. The findings may not apply to other populations, such as female athletes or professional athletes, due to the study's focus on male students at the school level. Both the long-term effects of various leadership styles on sports performance and the impact of leadership styles on these other groups could be the subject of future research.

Conclusion

The significant impact that leadership styles can have on male school-level sports performance has been brought to light by this study. The results indicate that democratic leadership, in particular, is associated with higher levels of performance, whereas autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles also have their place, depending on the circumstance.

When developing their leadership strategies, coaches and educators should take these findings into consideration. Their goal should be to create an atmosphere

that encourages both cooperation and discipline, ultimately leading to better sports results. The research offers practical suggestions for improving student-athlete performance and contributes to a broader comprehension of sports leadership. Coaches can play a pivotal role in shaping the success and development of their teams by adopting the most appropriate leadership styles. This will result in the development of individuals who are not only better athletes but also more complete people.

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