



ASSESSMENT OF AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR OF COACHES ON ATHLETES IN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM SPORTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed 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 be manipulated. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. A total of nine hundred and sixty (960) copies of questionnaire was distributed to athletes in selected States Sports Councils using the simple random sampling procedure. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using frequency and percentages for the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The two samples Z-test was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed: That athlete in team and individual sports did not have preference for coaches disposed towards autocratic behaviour. The following recommendations were made: Coaches should not engage in autocratic behaviours when coaching. Autocratic behaviours should not be adopted by coaches for increase in athletes' satisfaction and enhancement in performance.

Keywords: Assessment, Autocratic Leadership, Athletes, Behaviour, Coaches

INTRODUCTION

Sports Coaches are the pivots around which all major and important sports programme functions revolve. This means that the approach they adopt in directing, guiding and controlling the staff and athletes under them, could determine the pace of progress in their sports. As leaders, they place themselves before the group as they facilitate progress and inspire athletes to accomplish their goals (Leonard 2018). Northouse (2015) quoted Harry S. Truman, 33rd President of the United States who once said, "A leader is a man who can persuade people to do what they do not want to do, or do what they are too lazy to do". Leadership process involves influencing of staff and directing them towards goal attainment. It is the influencing of the actions, attitude, feelings and goals of a subordinate in a social system by a leader with the willing and ready cooperation of the subordinate being influenced. While influencing staff, certain leadership styles are exhibited. Eze (2011) defined leadership styles as the total pattern of a leader's actions, as perceived by the leader's staff. Adeyemi and Adu (2011) on their part further asserted that leadership style is the characteristic way in which a leader relates with his staff and handles the tasks before the group.

It is easy to point to examples of great leaders, and it is a lot more difficult to determine what makes them such great leaders (Weinberg and Gould, 2003). Colin Powell, Former United State Secretary of State describes great leaders who have the ability to put through arguments, debates and doubts to offer a solution to everybody that can understand (Harari, 2002).

Research from the sports psychology literature suggests that coaching is an important leadership competency because it has been found to have important effects on performers' attitudes (Smith and Smoll, 1996).

Autocratic leadership behaviour is a management style wherein one person controls all the decisions and takes very little inputs from other group members. Autocratic leaders make choices or decisions based on their own beliefs and do not involve others for their suggestions or advice (Nevarez, Wood and Penrose, 2013). The autocratic leadership style according to Cherry (2018) is determined by the leader's power due to the fact that the leader has absolute power in a group or organization. The leader alone makes decisions and takes responsibility for the conduct, results and achievement of the organization. In a research conducted by Beam, Serwatka and Wilson, (2004); Weinberg and Gould, (2003) discovered that athletes who play team sports such as basketball, volleyball, or football prefer a more autocratic coach than an athlete who plays an individual sport such as tennis or golf.

Chelladurai (1990), Chelladurai & Turner (2006), postulated that male basketball players and wrestlers showed the greatest preference of autocratic behaviour of the teams surveyed. These athletes may have more confidence in autocratic coaches. These findings support Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) and Wang (1996) who also found that males preferred a greater degree of autocratic behaviour than females.

According to Multidimensional Model of Leadership; behaviour consists of five factors proposed by Chelladurai and Saleh

(1980) and an additional factor of Situational Consideration behaviour proposed by Zhang (1997). The scale has been used to measure athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour, their preferred leadership behaviours, and the coaches' perceptions of their own behaviour. For more than two decades, the behavioural categories of the Leadership Scale for Sport have been used by a wide range of researchers to measure coaching behaviours in sport.

In sport, models of leadership, specifically the Multidimensional Model for Sport Leadership, developed almost 30 years ago are still widely used. From the literature, researchers have accepted the multi-dimensional model of leadership; different situations will dictate certain coaching or leadership behaviours. Studies have shown that the type of sport played impacts the preferred coaching behaviours reported by many athletes. For instance, athletes who participate in individual sports prefer different coaching behaviours from athletes who participate in team sports (Loughead and Hardy, 2005). Each member of your team has a potential for personal greatness, the leader's job is to help such athletes develop their potentials. A challenge for coaches is to find a leadership behaviour that is conducive to team success.

The researcher therefore hypothesized that there is no significant difference between individual and team sport athletes in their preference for a coach with autocratic leadership behaviour.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to assess autocratic leadership behaviour of coaches on athletes in individual and team sports in Nigeria. The following are the specific objectives:

1. To explore the leadership styles that contributes to athletes' performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

Coded Sports	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Z-calc.	DF	P	Z-critical
Team sports	2.37	0.847	0.035	0.712	906	0.477	1.96
Individual sports	2.36	0.777	0.044				

(Z= 1.96, P > 0.05)

The two groups did not differ significantly in their preference for coaches with the autocratic leadership behaviours as expressed by their mean scores in the table. This is indicated by an observed Z-calculated value of 0.712 and a probability level of significance of 0.477 (P > 0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference between individual and team sport athletes in their preference for a coach with autocratic leadership behaviours in Nigeria is therefore retained. An observation of the mean scores by athletes from the team and individual sports clearly revealed that the two groups

2. To investigate the relationship between the effective leadership styles and performance of athletes.
3. To identify the significance of leadership styles in the athletes performance.
4. To develop the model that shows relationship among different styles of leadership athletes' performance.

METHODOLOGY

Ex-post facto research design was used for this study because it is best used to find out the conditions of relationships that exist, opinions that are held, effects that are evident or trends that are developed on a group of people under study by collecting and analyzing data from a sample considered to be representative of the entire group. Stratified random sampling was used to group Nigeria into existing six geo-political zones which include; North Central (NC), North West (NW), North East (NE), South West (SW), South East (SE), and South-South (SS). From each stratum two States were selected at random through simple random sampling of dip and pick method. The purposive sampling technique was further used to select athletes by gender and sports in the selected States for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. A total of 960 copies of questionnaire were administered and 908 were retrieved. Descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data on demographic characteristics of the respondents. The two-way sample Z-test was used to analyse the hypothesis for this research. An alpha level of 0.05 was used to accept or reject the hypothesis.

HO: There is no significant difference between individual and team sport athletes in their preference for a coach with autocratic leadership behaviour.

did not like or have preference for coaches with autocratic leadership behaviours.

Discussion of the Findings

This study revealed that there was no significant difference between athletes in team and individual sports in their preference for coaches' disposition toward coaches with autocratic behaviours. This is in line with Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) who conducted a research at the Canadian University using the coaching behaviour of coaches. They found that team

sport athletes prefer more autocratic behaviour from their coaches than individual sport athletes. Additionally, in a recent study conducted by Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson (2004) revealed that inter-collegiate male athletes showed significantly greater preferences for autocratic behaviour than the female athletes. Terry (1984) hypothesized that in the Singapore athletic context; male student-athletes preferred more autocratic behaviour than their female counterparts. Males according to previous studies conducted by Martin, Jackson, Richardson, and Weiller (1999) prefer more autocratic decisions making behaviour while having technical instructions from coaches. Sherman, Fuller and Speed (2000) found that male athletes preferred slightly higher an autocratic behaviour than their female counterparts. However, in a research conducted by Chelladurai (1999), Chelladurai and Saleh (1980), & Chelladurai, (2006) of athletes from three districts in Australian sporting context athletes from all the three districts, autocratic behaviour was not preferred. Houges, Ginnet & Curphy (2006) also stated that athletes in interdependence sports would prefer more autocratic behaviour than those in independent sports. According to Chelladurai (1990), Chelladurai, & Turner, 2006) showed that results in the autocratic behaviour revealed that male athletes prefer a greater degree of autocratic behaviour compared to female athletes. Male basketball players and wrestlers showed the greatest preference of autocratic behaviour of the teams surveyed. These athletes may have more confidence in autocratic coaches. It could be that these athletes preferred greater degrees of autocratic behaviour than other surveyed sports increase as it attack their self-confidence or team. The wrestlers' preference for autocratic behaviour seems contradictory of earlier findings in which individual sport athletes' preferred democratic behaviour than team sport athletes. Further research of wrestlers' preferences of autocratic behaviour and democratic behaviour may help to clarify this discrepancy (Chelladurai, 1990). Furthermore, he stated that coaches who make decision indecently and stress personal authority show high degree of autocratic personal authority. Wang (1996) also found that male athletes preferred a greater degree of autocratic behaviour than females.

The researcher is of the opinion that autocratic coaches make most of the decisions for the team, they are not open to criticism and is 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. Such behaviour will not create a conducive environment where athletes can recover

quickly from a loss, considering it as a challenge rather than a failure. These categories of coaches who remain insensitive to the needs of the athletes do not create an enabling environment in which athletes are motivated to maintain participation and improve performance.

CONCLUSION

Autocratic leadership behaviour prevents the use of creative ideas to problem solving. Therefore Coaches should learn to exercise restraint in the use of the behaviour in the running of their sports. Autocratic behaviour could sometimes be a good method to achieve success during training sessions.. Actually, autocratic behaviour has its shortcomings and numerous advantages. In short, autocratic leadership behaviour could lead to higher productivity but in the long-run, lack of initiative and institutional squabble are common. The increase in productivity experienced in an autocratic situation is as a result of the leader's use of performance recognition and sanction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings it is recommended that:

1. Coaches should make themselves accessible to the athletes at all times.
2. Coaches should be sensitive to the needs of athletes.
3. Coaches should be friendly to athletes for performance to take place.
4. It is recommended that coaches should not engage in autocratic behaviours, they should adjust their behavioural dispositions to suit their athletes' requirement so as to encourage performance in sports.
5. It is recommended that coaches should not engage in autocratic behaviours when coaching

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