

FOOTBALL COACH LEADERSHIP STYLES AND PLAYERS COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and player's commitment in Ethiopian premier league soccer clubs. 207 players who participated in Ethiopian premier league soccer competition completed the demographic questionnaire, leadership scale for sport (LSS) and sport commitment scale (SCMS). The LSS contained 40 items that measured five dimensions of leadership behaviors and the SCMS with 14 items assessed four dimensions of player's commitment. Results showed a significant positive relationship between coaches' behaviors of training and instruction, democratic behavior, and social support with sport enjoyment and social constraint to continue participation in sport activity. There was no significant relationship between positive feedback and autocratic behaviors with sport commitment and Involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation. Comparison of coaches' leadership styles demonstrated that coaches exhibited higher training and instruction and lower autocratic behavior. In addition, findings showed significant relationship between sport commitment and team success and the coaches of successful teams exhibited higher training and instruction behaviors. In summary, the effect of coaching behaviors on player's commitment and team success apparently demonstrated the importance of using the appropriate leadership styles.

Keywords: Leadership Theories, Commitment, Leadership Styles

INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of leadership definitions. Yukl and Van Fleet (1992) claimed that leadership definitions differ in various aspects such as leader types, leadership objectives, and methods of leadership exercise. Nahavandi (2008) explained that researchers disagree with leadership definitions because of the fact that leadership is a complicated phenomenon mixed with the leader, the follower, and the situation. Hughes et al. (2008) explained that some researchers have paid attention to the leader's personal traits while others have focused on the relationship between leaders and followers or situational factors that influence leadership behavior.

Therefore, researchers have defined leadership in various ways. For example, Fiedler (1967) defined leadership as managing group work with appropriate control and coordination. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, and Fleishman (2000) claimed that leadership is a complicated form that provides solutions for social concerns. Roach and Behling (1984) defined leadership as the procedure of guiding an organized team toward achieving its objectives. Rost (1993) defined leadership as influence dynamics among leaders and followers who attempt to bring true organizational changes that reflect their common goals.

Daft (1999) claimed that leaders today face a major challenge; the rapidly changing world requires a new leadership paradigm. He elaborated that leaders should realize the transformational shift from cherishing stability to valuing change, from central to empowerment, from competition to collaboration, from focusing on each part to building relationships of parts, from uniformity to diversity. He further claimed that in the new era represented by a dramatic change, an old philosophy of control-oriented leadership is not effective anymore, and that leaders should make effort to retain soft elements of leadership qualities in addition to hard management skills

In the context of sport competition also different Investigation of leadership behavior and the effects of leadership in athletic is needed to understand the performance of sport teams as an organization. Continuous investigation on coaching leadership can facilitate the improvement of coaching performance and the evaluation of effectiveness of coaching leadership on athletic performance because effective coaching behavior has been shown to be an important determinant of team success.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to explore the relationship between leadership style of coaches, player commitment and performance in Ethiopian premier league football clubs.

REVIEW LITERATURE

Trait School

In the field of leadership, for the last decades, a variety of leadership theories and approaches have been identified or developed. Trait theory is one of the earliest developments in the study of leadership. This theory were studied to determine what made certain people great leader. Trait theorists stated that leaders have common physical features and the same personality characteristics. A person is born a leader. Barker (2001) refers to this theory the 'Great Person Theory' as demographics and characteristics of the leader differentiate him or her from a 'normal' person. In a study by House, Shane and Herold (1996) the most important characteristics of an outstanding leader are an everlasting drive for achievement, honesty, integrity and the willingness and ability to share and motivate employees towards common goals. When you have these characteristics you are more likely to lead than to follow.

Fiedler's Contingency Theory

Fiedler's (1967) contingency theory posited that effective group performance was dependent upon the appropriate match of the leader's personality and the situation. Personality orientation of the leader is centered on a task or interpersonal style. Situational factors that influence leader effectiveness included leader- member relations, degree of task structure,

and power-position of the leader. Leader-member relations referred to the quality of the relationship between the leader and member. The leader's influence over the members was enhanced through a strong relationship. Task structure referred to how clearly the goals and methods to achieve the goals were stated and understood. As the structure of tasks increases for the group, so does the leader's influence over the members. Power-position of the leader referred to control over rewards and sanctions, authority over group members, and support provided from the organization. The leader's influence over the members was in direct proportion to the power possessed by the leader over the members.

The Hersey-Blanchard: Situational Leadership theory

This theory is based on the amount of direction (task behavior) and amount of socio-emotional support (relationship behavior) a leader must provide given the situation and the level of maturity of the followers.

This theory places the emphasis in leader behavior on the subordinates and not on the leader. Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1977, and 1982) proposed that effective leaders could and should adjust their leadership style to respond to the life cycle needs of their followers and to the environment. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) suggested that an appropriate leadership style for a specific situation be determined by the maturity of the followers. Maturity is defined in terms of the capacity to set and obtain goals, willingness and ability to assume responsibility, and education or/and experience (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

Path-Goal Theory

Path-Goal theory is about how leaders motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals. Drawing heavily from research on what motivates employees, path-goal theory first appeared in the leadership literature in the early 1970s in the works of Evans (1970), House (1971), House and Dessler (1974), and House and Mitchell (1974). The stated goal of this leadership theory is to enhance employee performance and employee satisfaction by focusing on employee motivation. In contrast to the situational approach, which suggests that a leader must adapt to the development level of subordinates, and unlike contingency theory, which emphasizes the match between the leader's style and specific situational variables, path-goal theory emphasizes the relationship between the leader's style and characteristics of the subordinates and the work setting.

Sport Commitment Measurement and Research

In an effort to test the concepts associated with the Sport Commitment Model, researchers developed the Sport Commitment Model Scale (Scanlan, Simons, Carpenter, Schmidt, & Keeler, 1993). The purpose of the Sport Commitment Model Scale (SCMS) is to assess the determinants of sport commitment, "a psychological construct representing the desire and resolve to continue sport participation." These determinants include an athlete's sport enjoyment, the attractiveness of involvement alternatives, personal investments in participation, social constraints to continue participating in the sport activity, and involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation. The 14-item SCMS measures sport commitment, sport enjoyment, social constraints, and involvement opportunities. Respondents complete the SCMS by using a five point Likert scale, with 1 signifying "not at all/none or nothing" and 5 representing "very much or a lot."

Using responses from 178 Little League athletes (n=95 females/83 males), the researchers reported Cronbach alpha coefficients of .89 for Sport Commitment, .95 for Sport Enjoyment, .88 for Social Constraints, and .80 for Involvement Opportunities. Confirmatory factor analyses across diverse samples supported the validity of items to measure the sport commitment, sport enjoyment, social constraints, and involvement opportunities constructs based on the responses of 1,342 participants of diverse ethnic backgrounds in three different youth sports programs (n=553 male football players; n=322 male and n=294 female youth soccer players; n=173 female volleyball players).

Structural equation modeling results demonstrated that the sport commitment model was a good fit of the data (CFI = .981), as the findings accounted for 68% of the commitment variance (Carpenter et.al, 1993). It was determined that sport enjoyment, personal investments, and, to a lesser extent, involvement opportunities were the most salient factors, but sport commitment was negatively related to social constraints, which contradicts the previous hypothesis. It is important to note that the involvement opportunities component was excluded from the structural equation modeling analysis in this study due to measurement problems.

A study involving team sports and the deliberate theory of practice tested the tenets of the Sport Commitment Model (Helsen et.al, 1998). The study utilized international, national, and provincial soccer and field hockey players and had them recall the amount of time they spent in individual and team practice, sport-related activities, and everyday activities at the start of their career and every three years since. Furthermore, the athletes were asked to rate those activities in terms of their relevance for improving performance, effort and concentration required, and enjoyment. Since sport enjoyment is highly related to sport commitment, Scanlan's Sport Commitment Model (SCM) was suggested to be a significant piece of the sport expertise puzzle. With regard to support for a theory of expertise based solely on deliberate practice, the authors opined, "Much of the data would suggest that the most critical part of producing skilled athletes is to find individuals who are highly motivated and likely to persist over the long duration required to produce an expert.

The results of the study supported this position, and the authors concluded that the SCM "provides an outline of the motivational structure and precursor's necessary for the development of expert performance. A recent review has confirmed the importance of SCM in relation to the development of sport expertise (Starkes, 2000).

Weiss, Kimmel, and Smith (2001) published a tennis-specific study in the realm of sport commitment that posited sport enjoyment as a mediating variable in the SCM. The authors tested both an original version of the SCM and a revised model of the SCM where enjoyment was a mediator of the relationships between determinants and level of commitment.

Commitment and Leadership

Research has shown that leadership, as an organizational characteristic, is predictive of commitment (Glisson&Durick, 1988; Morris & Sherman, 1981). In general, the research on the relationship between leadership and commitment is organized into two leadership constructs: leadership behaviors and transformational leadership. The Ohio State Leadership Studies characterized leadership behaviors into two factors termed consideration and

initiation of structure (Bass, 1981). Consideration comprised the extent to which a leader exhibited concern for the welfare of the other members of the group. Initiation of structure referred to the extent to which a leader initiated activity in the group, organized it, and defined the way work was to be done. Organizational commitment has been shown to be positively related to consideration and initiating structure (Hunt and Liesbscher, 1973; O'Reilly and Roberts, 1978; Sheridan and Vredenburgh, 1978).

Transformational leaders are characterized as having the ability to arouse subordinate commitment (Bass, 1985; Hater & Bass, 1988). However, few studies have examined the relationship between leadership and commitment through the context of transformational leadership. Koh, Steers, and Terborg (1995) found that transformational leadership had significant and substantial add-on effects to transactional leadership in the prediction of organizational commitment in an educational setting. In a sport setting, Kent and Chelladurai (2001) found transformational leadership to be significantly related to affective and normative commitment in an intercollegiate athletic department.

Yousef (2000) studied the role of organizational commitment in the relationships of leadership behavior with the work outcomes of job satisfaction and job performance in a non-western country where multiculturalism was a dominant feature of the workforce. The results indicated that those who perceived their superiors as adopting consultative or participative leadership behavior were more committed to their organizations, more satisfied with their jobs, and maintained high levels of performance. The results also supported the role of organizational commitment as a mediator in the relationship between leadership behavior and job satisfaction and job performance.

METHOD

Participants

Based on the criterion obtained from the last three years club competition results from the Ethiopian Football Federation, three categories of club status were identified. There were 14 clubs in Ethiopian premier league soccer competition. Accordingly, those clubs whose results fall between 1-3 were considered 'successful', clubs who ranked between 6 - 8 were considered 'less successful', and clubs who were ranked the last three (12-14) were considered 'unsuccessful'. Then, all male players in the successful, less successful and unsuccessful category were selected purposely for the study which makes the total participant 207.

Measures

The study used a questionnaire to measure three constructs, including player's demographic information, leadership scale for sport (LLS) and sport commitment scale (SCMS). The study participant filled in the demographic information that asked the players to report their age, years of experience in playing soccer, perceived leadership of their coach and players commitment.

The Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) was administered with the aim of assessing athletes' perceptions of their coaches' leadership style and behaviors along five different dimensions was used in this study. The LSS consists of 40 items that asked the athlete to indicate the degree to which his coach exhibited the type of behavior described in the individual items.

The response format consists of a five-point Likert-type scale (always, often, occasionally, seldom or never) with numbers representing athletes' perceptions that their coach exhibited that type of behavior. The 40 individual items in the LSS were divided into five subscales with each subscale representing a particular type of coaching leadership style or behavior. The five sub scales were: autocratic behavior subscale, democratic behavior subscale, training and instruction subscale, social support subscale and the positive feedback subscale

Sport commitment model scale (SCMS) aims to assess the determinants of sport commitment, "a psychological construct representing the desire and resolve to continue sport participation." These determinants include an athlete's sport enjoyment, the attractiveness of involvement alternatives, personal investments in participation, social constraints to continue participating in the sport activity, and involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation. The 14-item SCMS measures sport commitment (SC), sport enjoyment(SE), social constraints(SSC), and involvement opportunities(SIO). Respondents complete the SCMS by using a five point Likert scale, with 1 signifying "not at all/none or nothing" and 5 representing "very much or a lot."

Both the LSS and SCMS had a proven content, concurrent, predictive, factorial and construct validity (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998; Chelladurai, 1993; and Horn, 2002). Moreover, pilot testing to check the internal consistency of the various scales were computed. The internal consistencies for the various scales were presented in table 1 below. For the leadership scale, the reliability ranges from .83 for the training and instruction behavior to .68 for the autocratic one. For the commitment scale the internal consistency were .79for sport enjoyment and .72 for sport commitment.

RESULTS

The participants' age ranged from 21 to 30 years of age with a mean age score of 26.98 yrs and a standard deviation of 2.24. The mean score of players' playing experience of soccer was 6.0 with a standard deviation of 2.1.

The first objective was to find out the relationship between coach leadership style and players commitment. In this study, player's commitment was categorized into sport commitment (SC), Sport enjoyment (SE), social constraint to continue participating in sport activity (SSC), and Involvement opportunity afforded by continued participation (SIO). Table 1 below displayed the relationship between coach leadership style and task cohesion.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation between coach leadership style and commitment

	Training & instruction	Democratic behavior	Autocratic behavior	Social support	Positive feedback
SC	.052	.042	.023	.100	.098
SE	.282**	.345**	.011	.183*	.088
SSC	.183*	.224**	.029	.107	.046
SIO	-.118	-.017	.100	.091	.120

Note: * and **indicate statistical significance at 5 and 1 per cent level significance. SC = sport commitment; SE = sport enjoyment; SSC = social constraint to continue participation in sport activity; SIO= Involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation.

As shown in table 1, sport enjoyment (SE) had a statistically significant positive relation with training and instruction ($r=.282, p<.01$), democratic behavior style ($r=.345, p<.01$) and social leadership style ($r=.183, p<.05$). On the other hand, autocratic and feedback leadership style did not have any relationship with sport commitment.

Likewise, social constraint to continue participation in sport activity (SSC) had a statistically significant positive relation with training and instruction ($r=.183, p<.05$), democratic behavior style ($r=.224, p<.01$). On the other hand, autocratic, social support and positive feedback leadership style did not have any relationship with sport commitment.

Unlike sport enjoyment (SE) and social constraint to continue participation in sport activity (SSC), both sport commitment and involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation did not have any statistical significant relationship.

In this research it was also investigated to find out which coaching leadership styles as perceived by players were the most common in Ethiopia premier league. As indicated in figure 1 below the soccer coach in Ethiopia exhibited training and instruction leadership style more than the others style (Mean = 39.9, SD= 11.1) followed by the democratic style (Mean = 28.8, SD= 6.7) and social support (Mean = 20.1, SD =6.3). On the other hand, the Ethiopian coaches exhibited the positive feedback (Mean = 15.7, SD =4.1) and autocratic style (Mean = 15.1 SD =2.7) least. (See graph 1 below).

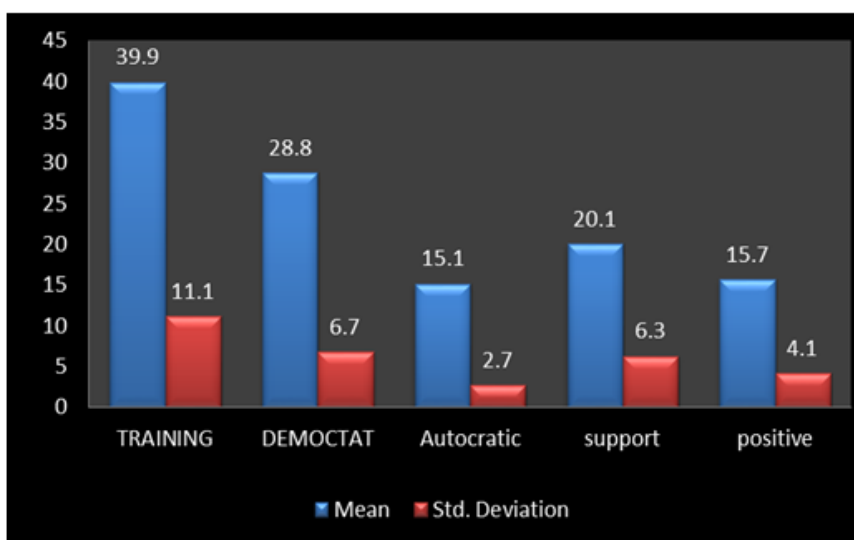


Figure 1: Comparison of coach leadership styles

An attempt was also made to see whether there are differences on team success (categorized as successful, less successful and unsuccessful teams) by coach leadership styles. In this regard, it was found out that successful team exhibited a higher score on training and instruction (Mean = 43.90,SD = 9.30), democratic leadership style (Mean = 29.51,SD = 7.50) , social support style (Mean = 20.89,SD = 5.87) and positive feedback (Mean = 16.42,SD =4.09) than both the less successful and unsuccessful teams . On the other hand, there were no differences on team successes with regard to autocratic leadership styles (Mean = 14.2, SD =2.8). (See table 2)

Table 2. Coach Leadership styles by Team success

Variables	Leader ship styles									
	TI		DB		AB		SS		PF	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Successful	43.90	9.30	29.51	7.50	15.26	2.83	20.89	5.87	16.42	4.09
Less successful	43.30	7.97	28.20	6.70	15.00	2.62	20.57	5.98	16.37	4.37
Unsuccessful	31.03	11.52	28.70	5.83	15.16	2.59	18.45	6.84	13.90	3.25
Total	39.88	11.12	28.79	6.73	15.14	2.68	20.06	6.27	15.66	4.11

Similarly players Commitment with team success was cross tabulated. The findings revealed that those teams who were successful and less successful scored higher than the unsuccessful ones on measure of determinants of sport commitment (SC, SE, SSC, and SIO). (See table below)

Table 3. Commitment by team success

Variables	Sport commitment sub scales							
	SC		SE		SSE		SIO	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Successful	12.38	2.29	13.27	2.56	9.49	2.68	9.06	2.62
Less successful	11.04	3.31	11.74	2.71	8.97	2.55	8.25	2.54
Unsuccessful	11.64	2.89	11.11	3.09	8.84	2.22	8.14	2.10
Total	11.71	2.88	11.98	2.92	9.08	2.49	8.52	2.48

Note: SC = sport commitment; SE = sport enjoyment; SSC = social constraint to continue participation in sport activity; SIO= Involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation

DISCUSSION

The objective of the research was to find out coaches leadership styles as related to commitment in premier league soccer clubs of Ethiopia. Moreover , the research attempted to investigate which coaching leadership styles as perceived by players were the most common in Ethiopia premier league and whether there are differences on team success (categorized as successful, less successful and unsuccessful teams) by coach leadership styles and by commitment.

To this end it was found out that Ethiopian premier league soccer players perceived training and instruction coaching behavior, democratic and social support had a statistically significant positive relationship with Sport enjoyment (SE). Similarly, they also perceived training and instruction coaching behaviour and democratic and social support had a statistically significant positive relationship with social constraint to continue participation in sport activity (SSC).On the other hand, the relationship between autocratic leadership style and feedback leadership style with Sport enjoyment (SE) were not statistically significant.

Similarly, the relationship between autocratic behaviour, social support and feedback leadership style with social constraint to continue participation in sport activity (SSC) were not statistically significant.

On contrary, the Ethiopian premier league player's perceived both sport commitment (SC) and involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation (SIO) did not have any statistical significant relationship with coach's leadership styles. Therefore, if the coach provides the desired level of autocratic behaviour and positive feedback behavior, he or she has the capability to influence the athlete's desire to resolve or continue sport participation. For the remaining leadership behaviors, preference scores were better predictors of sport commitment for democratic behavior, training and instruction, social support, and autocratic behavior.

This finding is consistent with the findings of prior research that has shown leadership, as an organizational characteristic, to be predictive of commitment (Glisson & Durick, 1988; Morris & Sherman, 1981).

Sport commitment operates under a similar basis as organizational commitment, but it possesses a different focus or target of the behavior. Among sport-related studies, Price and Weiss (2000) showed that coaching behaviors can influence an athlete's continued involvement in sport, which is the operational definition of sport commitment participation (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, & Keeler, 1993). The results of this study support the notion that leadership behavior (i.e., positive feedback and autocratic behaviors) can alter sport commitment and its determinants, particularly positive feedback and autocratic behaviors.

Regarding to perceived coach's leadership styles, the result of this study showed that coaches exhibited a higher leadership style in training and instruction followed by democratic behavior, social support, positive feedback and low in autocratic behavior. The findings of this research are in agreement with the findings of Bennet and Manuel (2002). With regard to differences among team success on commitment, it was discovered that the successful and the less successful teams had higher level of SC, SE, SIO and SSC cohesion than unsuccessful ones. In this regard, Kent and Chelladurai (2001) have found and reported that transformational leadership to be significantly related to commitment in an intercollegiate athletic department. Similarly, Yousef (2000) also reported that, regarding to the role of commitment on the leadership behaviour, those who perceived their superiors as adopting consultative or participative leadership behavior were more committed to their organizations, more satisfied with their jobs, and maintained high levels of performance.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to find out the relationship between coach leadership styles, commitment and team success as perceived by Ethiopian premier league soccer players. To this end data were collected from 207 Ethiopian premier league players through a questionnaire. Data gathered through a questionnaire might have a limitation of indicating appropriately player's perceived behavior of their coaches. In spite of these limitations, the study came up with the following major points.

Sport enjoyment and social constraint to continue participation in sport activity had a statistically significant positive relationship with training and instruction, democratic

behaviour and social support while autocratic and feedback leadership style had a no significant relationship. On the other hand, sport commitment and involvement opportunities afforded by continued participation had no statistical significant relationship.

The soccer coach in Ethiopia exhibited training and instruction leadership style more than the others style followed by the democratic style and social support while the positive feedback and autocratic style were the least ones.

Successful team exhibited a higher score on training and instruction, followed by democratic leadership style, social support style and positive feedback than both the less successful and unsuccessful teams while there were no differences on team successes with regard to autocratic leadership styles. Successful and less successful scored higher than the unsuccessful ones on measure of commitment determinants.

IMPLICATIONS

The study investigated the relationship between coach leadership styles, commitment and team success as perceived by Ethiopian premier league soccer players. In the light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were forwarded.

A coach should promote training and instruction leadership style, democratic leadership style, social support style and positive feedback behavior among his team and should also promote a culture of all determinants of commitment among his/her team.

In the future, various research should be done to pinpoint the appropriate leadership style and commitment.

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