

The Relationship Between Coaches' Leadership Styles and Athletes' Burnout Among UiTM Perlis Athletes

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ABSTRACT

Burnout among athletes can be influenced by many factors and one of the most significant factors that influence athletes towards burnout is the leadership involved in their particular sports. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the preferred coaches' leadership styles, levels of athletes' burnout, and to investigate the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout among UiTM Perlis athletes. A total of 164 athletes (85 males and 79 females) participated in this study. The Revised Leadership Scale for Sport and the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire were used to collect data. Further, the data were analysed by using means and standard deviation of each item. Meanwhile, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. Results revealed that positive feedback was the most preferred coaches' leadership styles among UiTM Perlis athletes ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .54$). Results also showed that the overall score for burnout among athletes was considered low to moderate ($M = 2.52$, $SD = .70$). Pearson correlation test showed that there was a significant relationship between coaches' leadership styles of autocratic behaviour ($r = .385$, $p = .001$), training and instruction ($r = -.269$, $p = .001$), positive feedback ($r = -.295$, $p = .001$), situational consideration ($r = -.217$, $p = .005$) and athletes' burnout. Thus, this finding revealed that when coaches provided more training and instruction, more positive feedback, more situational consideration, and less autocratic behaviour tend to be associated with lower levels of burnout among athletes due to the expertise of coaches that could influence the athletes' psychological well-being.

Keywords: coaches' leadership styles, athletes' burnout, situational consideration, stress, anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Participation in sports is a source of great enjoyment for most athletes. However, in the past recent years, there are numerous stories of promising young athletes who appear to have it all in terms of potential, talent, and opportunity, but for some reasons they give up on their chosen sports. There is a common reason that underlies many of these cases which simply comes down to burnout. Because of

this, athletes' burnout has become a frequent topic, debate, and a matter of concern in both psychological and sport science worldwide (Akhrem & Gazdowska, 2016). A study by the American College of Sports Medicine (2021), stated that approximately 35% of elite athletes suffered from burnout, depression, eating disorder, and anxiety. This is worrying because sports should be an opportunity for athletes to have fun and improve their level of well-being. A previous study by Allen (2006) also stated the causes of burnout in athletics which showed that sports participation was not always a healthy experience for athletes. Without placing a strong priority on their psychological well-being, athletes could not perform at their best and healthiest levels (Daniels, Cormier, Gore, & McMahan, 2021). According to Allen (2006), athletes' burnout is defined as the psychological, emotional, and physical withdrawal from a sport that was once perceived as pleasurable due to ongoing stress.

On the other hand, coach is regarded as an essential component of human resources in sports. According to Misasi, Morin, and Kwasnowski (2016), the role of a coaches is considered to be an overtly complex process. The role of a coach does not merely focus on coaching, instead, it is manifold and varied (Szabo, 2012). It appears that the role of a coach seems to be the most challenging and difficult role among all roles of a person in sports. Coach stands out as a main figure as they are responsible in fostering athletes' mental, physical, technical, and tactical abilities. Effective coaches may be those who can identify, understand, and control their own and other emotions (Kamis, Radzi, & Kassim, 2021). However, what coaches do and how they act can have a significant effect on athletes' attitudes, feelings, stress, and performance (Nami, Mansouri, Dehnavi, & Bandali, 2013).

Burnout among athletes can be influenced by many factors and one of the most significant factors that influence athletes towards burnout is the leadership involved in their particular sports (Ryan, 2017). An improper leadership style presented by coaches has the capacity to negatively affect an athletes' sports experiences. Given the multiple interactions the coaches have with their athletes, they may have the potential to influence the athletes' experience of burnout. For example, coaches who put unreasonably high expectations, criticism, and pressure on their athletes to perform well have been shown to lead to burnout (Salehian & Sheikh Moghaddasi, 2021). In addition, previous research on athletes' burnout also revealed that coaches' attitudes and behaviours may contribute to the development of burnout, specifically through the influence of coaching style (Isoard -Gauthier, Trouilloud, Gustafsson, & Guillet-Descas, 2016). Because of this, prior study by Ryan (2017) stressed that the role of coaches on athletes' burnout is represented as one area for research that requires additional attention. Therefore, this study attempted to identify the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout in order to further expand the knowledge and findings in this area of research.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Respondents and Research Design

Correlational research design was used to test the hypothesis in this study in its null form. This design was selected because this study intends to identify the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout among the athletes of Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Perlis (UiTM Perlis). A set of questionnaires using an online platform was used to collect data from the participants.

A total of 164 athletes from UiTM Perlis which consisted of males (N = 85) and females (N = 79) participated in this study. The participants were among the athletes who represented UiTM Perlis in KARISMA 2022. In addition, the participants comprised of individual sports athletes (N = 31) and team sports athletes (N = 133).

Instrumentation

Revised Leadership Scale for Sport

An adopted version of the Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS) (Pido (2014); Zhang, Jensen, & Mann 1997) was used to assess the athletes' preferred coaching leadership styles. The Revised Leadership Scale for Sport is a 60 items questionnaire and consists of the following subscales: 1) Training and Instruction 2) Democratic Behaviour, 3) Autocratic Behaviour, 4) Social Support, 5) Positive Feedback, and 6) Situational Consideration. The items are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale with response options that range from 1 'never' (0% of the time), 2 'seldom' (25% of the time), 3 'occasionally' (50% of the time), 4 'often' (75% of the time), and 5 'always' (100% of the time).

Athletes' Burnout Questionnaire

Athletes' Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ), adopted from Raedeke and Smith (2001) was used to assess the athletes' levels of burnout. The questionnaire consists of 15 items and 3 subscales which are emotional and physical exhaustion ("I feel so tired from my training that I have trouble finding energy to do other things"), reduced sense of accomplishment ("I am not achieving much in sport"), and sport devaluation ("The effort I spend in sport would be better spent doing other things"). The items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (frequently), 5 (almost always). The internal consistency reliability of Cronbach's Alpha reported 0.82 for physical and emotional exhaustion, 0.81 for reduced sense of accomplishment, and 0.87 for sport devaluation which exceeded the recommended criterion of 0.70 (Dubuc-Charbonneau et al., 2014).

Data Collection

An approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: REC/371/2023). Next, the researcher obtained a permission from the Deputy Rector of Student Affairs, UiTM Perlis Branch. Prior to data collection, the consent form was distributed to the athletes who participated in Student Sports Carnival (KARISMA) 2022 that was held at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary and they were allowed to withdraw from this study any time. Then, the link to access the Google Form questionnaire was distributed to the participants. A week was given to the participants to complete the questionnaires. The participants submitted the questionnaires to the researcher once all the questions were completely answered.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 29. The statistical analysis included descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The data were analysed by using means and standard deviation of each item. For the purpose of correlation, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout. Statistical significance was set a $p < .05$.

RESULT

Preferred Coaches' Leadership Styles among UiTM Perlis Athletes

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistic results of preferred coaches' leadership styles among UiTM Perlis KARISMA 2022 athletes. Positive feedback was recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .54$) followed by training and instruction ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .56$), situational consideration (M

= 4.07, SD = .52), democratic behaviour (M = 3.73, SD = .48), and social support (M = 3.65, SD = .54). Autocratic behaviour was the least preferred with the lowest mean score (M = 2.89, SD = .86).

Table 1: Preferred Coaches' Leadership Styles among UiTM Perlis Athletes

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev
Training and Instruction	4.23	.56
Democratic Behaviour	3.73	.48
Autocratic Behaviour	2.89	.86
Social Support	3.65	.54
Positive Feedback	4.24	.54
Situational Consideration	4.07	.52

Athletes' Burnout

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistic of athletes' burnout. The average burnout scores out of a possible score of 5 were computed for each of the subscales. Based on the result below, reduced sense of accomplishment was recorded the highest mean score with (M = 2.61, SD = .58) followed by emotional and physical exhaustion (M = 2.52, SD = .92) and sport devaluation was recorded the lowest mean score with (M = 2.42, SD = .88). Overall, the mean score for athletes' burnout was (M = 2.52, SD = .70) out of a possible score of 5. By using the cut-off score determined by Dubuc-Charbonneau et al. (2014), this score could be considered as low to moderate levels of burnout as it was not near or above the mean score of three.

Table 2: Athletes' Burnout

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev
Emotional and Physical Exhaustion	2.52	.92
Sport Devaluation	2.42	.88
Reduced Sense of Accomplishment	2.61	.58
Total (Athletes' Burnout)	2.52	.70

Relationship Between Coaches' Leadership Styles and Athletes' Burnout Among UiTM Perlis Athletes

In order to determine the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout among UiTM Perlis athletes, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted. The results presented in Table 3 show a positive significant relationship between coaches' autocratic behaviour and athletes' burnout, $r(164) = .385, p = .001$. This study reported that the strength of the relationship was classified as weak as it fell between the range of .10 -.39 (Schober, Boer, & Schwarte, 2018).

Next, the results in Table 3 show that there were negative significant relationships between coaches' training and instruction, $r(164) = -.269, p = .001$, positive feedback, $r(164) = -.295, p = .001$, situational consideration, $r = -.217, p = .005$, and athletes' burnout. However, the strength of these relationships was classified as weak. Furthermore, there was no significant relationship between

coaches' democratic behaviour, $r(164) = .009$, $p = .905$, social support, $r(164) = -.032$, $p = .683$, and athletes' burnout.

Overall, the results in Table 3 indicate that the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout was not significant $r(164) = -.045$, $p = .564$.

Table 3: Correlation between Coaches' Leadership Styles and Athletes' Burnout

		Athletes' Satisfaction
Training and Instruction	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.269* .001
Democratic Behaviour	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.009 .905
Autocratic Behaviour	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.385* .001
Social Support	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.032 .683
Positive Feedback	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.295* .001
Situational Consideration	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.217* .005
Coaches' Leadership Styles	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.045 .564

* Correlation was significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed)

DISCUSSION

Preferred Coaches' Leadership Styles among UiTM Perlis Athletes

Based on the result shown on descriptive statistics (Table 1), the most preferred coaches' leadership style among UiTM Perlis KARISMA athletes was positive feedback ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .54$). This means that most athletes prefer their coaches to always recognize and show an appreciation for their effort and good performance. This current finding is consistent with the previous studies that showed positive feedback as the most preferred coaching behaviour (Bakri, Mashuri, Mokhtar, & Rahman, 2022; Ryan, 2017). Receiving positive feedback is one of the ways to improve athletes' performance and self-efficacy (Samson & Bakinde, 2021). Positive feedback which includes expressions of appreciation such as praising athletes for their contributions and performances has several positive consequences. For example, positive feedback may increase athletes' effort, reduce social loafing, and prevent role ambiguity among athletes (Høigaard et al., 2008). In a study by Rasyid, Aziz, and Tengah (2020), they stated that positive feedback increases athletes' sport participation, self-determined motivation, and group cohesion while lowering anxiety and burnout. From this, coaches' positive feedback can be seen to have a positive impact on athletes' emotional and psychological well-being.

Autocratic behaviour, on the other hand, was displayed as the least preferred coaches' leadership style among UiTM Perlis athletes ($M = 2.89$, $SD = .86$). This finding is in line with the previous studies that showed autocratic behaviour as the least preferred coach leadership style (Rasyid, Aziz, & Tengah, 2020; Bakri et al., 2022). The researcher can assume that the majority of the UiTM Perlis athletes in this study do not prefer their coaches to exhibit a lack of empathy and make

independent decision-making based on their power and authority. One study by Chang, Huang, Huang, and Hsieh (2019), it was stated that an autocratic leadership style would create a negative environment which subsequently leads athletes to feel the tension and develop a negative attitude towards the coaches. In an autocratic coaching environment, athletes have little to no say in decision-making or team-related matters. This lack of athlete involvement can lead to feelings of disempowerment, frustration, and demotivation. In such environment, athletes may experience emotional and physical exhaustion, decline enjoyment in their sports, and decrease their overall well-being. Therefore, it is recommended for coaches at UiTM Perlis to emphasize positive feedback as a key aspect of their coaching style. By doing so, coaches can create a supportive yet empowering environment that enhances athletes' motivation and fosters the overall athletes' development and well-being.

Relationship Between Coaches' Leadership Styles and Athletes' Burnout

The main objective of this study is to identify the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' burnout. Several qualitative studies showed that athletes' perceptions of the coaching style influence their level of burnout (Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2016). The findings of this study showed that there was a positive relationship between coaches' autocratic behaviour and athletes' burnout. However, the strength of the relationship was classified as weak. This revealed that as the level of autocratic behaviour from coaches increases, the level of burnout among athletes tends to increase slightly. This new finding corroborated earlier research that showed athletes who reported higher levels of burnout also thought their coaches had more authoritarian leadership styles (Altahayneh, 2013). For example, Quested and Duda (2011) mentioned that when the coach displays controlling coaching behaviours and does not give autonomy support, athletes are likely to experience higher levels of burnout.

Since the coach is self-centered and always disregarded athletes' opinions, this situation has made it difficult for athletes to inform the coach about their stress and fatigue which may cause burnout among them (emotional and physical exhaustion, reduced sense of accomplishment, sport devaluation). A study by Choi, Jeong, and Kim (2020) also reported that controlling coaching behaviour causes conflict between the coach and the athletes, which negatively affects athletes' motivation, achievement, and performance. Moreover, coaches that exhibit autocratic leadership may create an environment that focuses on performance outcomes rather than the overall well-being of athletes. Hence, the excessive pressure to meet coaches' expectations and fear the consequences of not meeting it may contribute athletes to stress and anxiety which eventually will lead to burnout. Therefore, it can be suggested that this finding could be the reason why UiTM Perlis athletes in this study least preferred autocratic coaching behaviour.

Furthermore, in the present study, the result also indicates that there is a negative significant relationship between coaches' leadership styles (training and instruction, situational consideration, positive feedback) and athletes' burnout. This current finding is in line with the previous studies that showed a negative correlation between coaches' leadership behaviour of training and instruction, positive feedback, and athletes' burnout (Altahayneh, 2013; Altahayneh, 2003). This indicates that coaches who exhibit less positive feedback, and provide less training and instruction are associated with athletes who have reported higher levels of burnout and anxiety (Altahayneh, 2013). A previous study by Chee, Rasyid, Tengah, and Low (2017) found that training and instruction leadership styles are associated with task-oriented skill development and appear to have been recognized by elite players as important coaching behaviour to improve their performance and subsequent chance of success. In addition, athletes feel more proficient, and experience less burnout when their coaches allow them to determine their own goals, participate in decision making, and provide input during training sessions (Price & Weiss, 2000). This finding corresponds with Yashiro (2008) who stated that athlete who perceive their coaches' leadership behaviours as being high on training and instruction experience

greater satisfaction. It can be assumed that training under the guidance of a coach can help athletes acquire the necessary skills which are important for them to become proficient in their sports.

However, the result from the previous study is found to be in contrast with this study. Salehian and Sheikh Moghaddasi (2021), revealed that training and instruction leadership styles have a positive and significant relationship and were found to have caused burnout. This happens because players do not pay much attention in training and instead of monitoring their progress, they perceive that the condition has caused them stress as they have to face hard training which has caused them physical fatigue. Since this study only examined student-athletes, this might influence the result. For instance, the specific characteristics of the student-athletes in this study such as prior experience, commitment levels, time spent with the coaches, and duration of competitions could have influenced the result.

Based on Fiedler's (1967) contingency theory, the effectiveness of a leadership style is dependent upon how well the leader's behaviour and characteristics match with different situations. This theory suggests that the leaders must be capable in adapting their leadership styles to suit the specific needs of each situation. In sports settings, coaches play an essential role in managing and supporting athletes. Their situational consideration can significantly contribute to reduce athletes' burnout. It was discovered in this present study that situational consideration has a negative relationship with athletes' burnout. This result suggests that when athletes perceive their coaches as being more considerate, it contributes to lower levels of burnout. This may be caused by the nature of the coaches' leadership where they always adapt their coaching styles and strategies to fulfil the unique needs of each athlete or the team as a whole. Coaches who exhibit situational consideration behaviour often understand athletes' strengths, weaknesses, motivation, and other external factors that may impact athletes. Indirectly, this will make athletes feel understood and supported which leads to increased satisfaction, motivation, and reduced burnout. A previous study by Pido (2014) also suggested that coaches should exhibit more situational consideration in order to increase the levels of satisfaction and decrease the number of quitting cases among athletes.

Coaches' training and instruction, situational consideration, and positive feedback, all of which can be considered as the key components of positive coaching behaviour and this positive behaviour may contribute to the overall athletes' development and well-being and indirectly will create a quality coach-athlete relationship. Previous study by Isoard-Gauthier et al. (2016) mentioned that athletes who report of having a good relationship with their coaches also claim to have higher personal accomplishment, lower emotional and physical exhaustion, and lesser negative feelings towards their sport. Hence, the findings of this study suggest that coaches should provide more training and instruction, positive feedback, and situational consideration for their athletes. These coaching behaviours may contribute to a positive coaching environment that promotes athletes' psychological well-being and reduce the likelihood of burnout.

CONCLUSION

The results in this study support the notion that athletes' preference of their coaches' leadership styles is of importance in understanding burnout in athletes. Understanding this preference can help coaches in adjusting their coaching methods so as to create a positive environment that enhances athletes' satisfaction, and motivation, and minimizes the risk of burnout. Thus, the athletes' participation will be both physically and mentally healthy. Additionally, the result in this present study has concluded that coaches' autocratic behaviour, training and instruction, situational consideration, and positive feedback are all significantly correlated with athletes' burnout. Hence, these results may also contribute to Horn's (1992) argument that coaching behaviours under the Model of Leadership (Chelladurai, 1978) ought to have an impact on athletes' outcomes rather than just satisfaction and performance. In light of these findings, it is recommended that coaches should provide more training and instruction, positive feedback, situational consideration, and less autocratic behaviour to reduce the risk of burnout among

athletes. The results of this study suggest that coaches play an important part in influencing the athletes' psychological, physical, and social aspects of their sports life. Lastly, the results and knowledge gained from this study may raise some important questions that could lead to theoretical advancements and practical changes and may inspire further studies by interested researchers in this field.

In order to gain broader findings and knowledge within this scope of study, it is recommended for future studies to consider the gender of the coaches. Thus, exploring the potential differences in leadership styles between male and female coaches and how they correlate to athletes' burnout can be insightful. Moreover, longitudinal studies also should be considered. Data collected at several times during the competitive seasons may provide a clearer picture of athletes' burnout since burnout among athletes may change before, during, and after a season.

LIMITATION

However, there are some limitations in this study. The first limitation is sample size relatively from the same university, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The study relied on self-reported which can be subjected to biases of the findings. Next limitation is the lack of established theory as the theoretical framework perspective and interpretation of results may influence assumptions inherent. The correlational findings may be unable to establish causal relationship between the leadership styles and burnout.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Mansor, S. H. and Kamarul Bahrin, F. N. were responsible for results, discussion and took the lead in writing the manuscript. Mohd Kassim, A. F. and Mohd Rosli, N. have completed the literature review section. Ismail, A. D. and Jamaludin, M. contributed to the interpretation of the results.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

We certify that the article is the Authors' and Co-Authors' original work. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This research/manuscript has not been submitted for publication nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We testify to the fact that all Authors have contributed significantly to the work, validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to Jurnal Intelek.

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