

The Effect of Congruence of Leadership Behaviors on Motivation, Commitment, and Satisfaction of College Tennis Players.

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This research was funded by the USTA Sport Science and Medicine Research Grant (2005)

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of leadership, motivation, commitment, and satisfaction have been mentioned as integral components of the sport of tennis by leading practitioners, scholars, and organizations (e.g., ASEP, 2002; Bolletieri, 2001; Kriese, 1997; Weinberg, 2002). Most research on coaching effectiveness has assumed that coaches greatly influence athletes' performance, behavior, psychological, and emotional well-being. Similarly, Horn (2002) suggested that the behavior of coaches directly influences the motivation, self-perceptions, perceived success, and achievement behavior of athletes.

Chelladurai's (1978) Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) has been used to study leadership in sport. The MML proposes that three aspects of leader behavior need to be in congruence with one another (match) to achieve effective performance and athlete satisfaction. The aspects of leader behavior include *required* (behavior that is required for a particular situation), *preferred* (behavior preferred of the coach by the athletes), and *perceived* (the coach's behavior as perceived by the athletes). Furthermore, Chelladurai posited that leader behavior was influenced by the characteristics of the situation, the leader, and the members. In the MML, leadership effectiveness, as defined in terms of congruence between required, preferred, and perceived leader behavior, results in member satisfaction and performance outcomes.

It has been questioned whether a match (or congruence) positively affects and a mismatch negatively influences an athlete's emotional state, behavior and/or performance. This study focused on the relationship between congruence of leadership behaviors and positive outcomes in collegiate tennis players.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential positive relationships between the congruence of preferred and perceived leadership behaviors with motivation, commitment, and satisfaction of college tennis players. Specifically, the congruence of leadership behaviors was compared with:

- Intrinsic (self-directed) and extrinsic (external) motivation,
- Amotivation (lack of motivation),
- Sport commitment/enjoyment, and
- Certain aspects of athlete satisfaction (e.g., individual performance, personal treatment, and training and instruction).

PARTICIPANTS

245 participants [78 males (31.8%), 167 females (68.2%)] from 76 colleges participated in this study.

- Age: mean = 20.01 years (ranging from 18 to 24 years)
- Nationality: 78.8% United States, 22.2% one of 33 other countries
- NCAA Division: I (42%), II (9.4%), III (48.6%)
- Collegiate Playing Experience: mean = 11.05 years (ranging from 1 to 25 years)
- Singles Playing Position: mean = 4.47th (ranging from 1st to 20th)

YEAR PERFORMED 2005

HYPOTHESES

- *H1a*: The ability level of the collegiate tennis players as defined by NCAA division level will be a determinant of preferred leadership behavior.
- *H1b*: The ability level of the collegiate tennis players as defined by singles starting status will be a determinant of preferred leadership behavior.
- *H2*: The gender of the collegiate tennis players will be a determinant of preferred leadership behavior.
- *H3*: Intrinsic motivation will be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
- *H4*: Extrinsic motivation will not be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
- *H5*: Amotivation will not be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
- *H6*: Sport commitment and its determinants will be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
- *H7*: Athlete satisfaction will be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.

PROCEDURES

- 1107 collegiate tennis coaches were informed of the study via email during the last two weeks of the regular season.
- One week later, an email was sent to each coach describing the risks and benefits of the study, directions to complete the survey on a secure website, and a request that he/she encourage and facilitate athlete participation.
- Coaches were asked to forward the email to their athletes.
- Follow-up reminders were sent to coaches each week for a total of four weeks.
- Surveys were conducted in an online format so as to maximize player convenience, secure response confidentiality, and minimize necessary paper. Surveys were administered through a third party company named FormSite (<http://www.formsite.com>).
- Surveys included a demographic questionnaire, the preferred and perceived versions of the Revised Leadership Scale for Sports, Sport Motivation Scale, Sport Commitment Model Scale, and Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

- Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the demographic variables.
- Multivariate multiple regression analyses were utilized to determine the effect of demographic variables on leadership behavior preferences. This statistical procedure addressed hypotheses *H1a*, *H1b*, and *H2*.
- Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the effect of leadership behavior congruence on the motivation, commitment, and satisfaction of the athletes. This statistical procedure addressed hypotheses: *H3*, *H4*, *H5*, *H6*, and *H7*.



IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

- The discovery that gender and playing ability did not affect preferences for coaching leadership behavior type contradicted past research (e.g., Beam, 2002; Erle, 1981; Riemer & Toon, 2001) and should be carefully considered. Because these findings may have come about because of the unique sample that was used and/or the way in which playing ability was measured, more research on the topic is necessary to draw more definitive conclusions.
- The results of this study indicated that a match between certain preferred and perceived leadership behaviors were related to certain aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, amotivation, sport commitment, sport enjoyment, individual performance satisfaction, personal treatment satisfaction, team performance satisfaction, and training and instruction satisfaction.
- The leadership behaviors that warrant special attention because of their multiple influences were autocratic behavior and positive feedback. In order to best influence your athletes' commitment, motivation and satisfaction with tennis, it would be useful to determine the preferences you athletes have for these leadership behaviors and adapt your coaching to meet these needs (keeping in mind the impact of factors like league expectations and policies).
- USA Tennis could also take part in helping optimize the coach-athlete relationship. Rather than selecting athletes to train at its two facilities based on geography and when assigning traveling coaches to athletes on the ATP/WTA Tours, USA Tennis could match prospective athletes with a coach who displays the athlete's preferred leadership style.
- In summary, the results of this study could have a profound impact on how tennis is taught across the world in a variety of individual and group settings. More attention might be given to matching preferred leadership behaviors of the student and perceived leadership behaviors of the coach to optimize player motivation, commitment, and satisfaction.

RESULTS

Leadership Preferences:

- Male and female players did not differ in their preferences of coach leadership behaviors.
- Athletes of low and high ability (determined by NCAA division and starting status), appeared to prefer similar types of leadership from their coaches.

Motivation:

- A match (congruence) between athletes' preferred and perceived coaches' *Autocratic Leadership Behavior* (e.g., making decisions without the input of an athlete, presenting ideas forcefully, keeping aloof from an athlete, etc.) was related to:
 - Athletes who were more likely to perform an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction experienced while learning, exploring, or trying to understand something new.
 - Athletes who valued and judged a tennis-related behavior as important.
- A match between athletes' preferred and perceived coaches' *Positive Feedback* was related to:
 - Athletes who were more likely to have the intrinsic desire to engage in a sport-related activity in order to experience stimulating sensations (e.g., feeling energized from playing, fun, and excitement).
- A match between athlete's preferred and perceived coaches' *Situation Consideration* (e.g., helping athletes identify good reasons to continue training for tennis) and *Social Support* (e.g., care and concern for an athlete) was related to:
 - Reducing the effects of amotivation (e.g., burnout) in their players.

Sport Commitment:

- A match between athletes' preferred and perceived coaches' *Autocratic Leadership Behavior* was related to:
 - Athletes' decisions to continue participation in tennis.
 - Athletes' enjoyment of tennis, and thus commitment to their tennis career.
- A match between athletes' preferred and perceived coaches' *Positive Feedback* was related to:
 - Athletes' decisions to continue participation in tennis.

Satisfaction:

- A match between athletes' preferred and perceived coaches' *Autocratic Leadership Behavior* was related to:
 - Athletes' satisfaction with their overall performance, performance improvements, and goal achievements.
 - Athletes' satisfaction with other coaching elements such as social support and positive feedback.
 - Athletes' level of satisfaction with their teams' overall performance, goal achievement and performance improvements as well as their satisfaction with the training and instruction provided by the coach.
- A match between athletes' preferred and perceived coaches' *Training and Instruction Behaviors* was related to:
 - Athletes' satisfaction with other coaching elements such as social support and positive feedback.

