



## LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SATISFACTION WITH SPORTS ACTIVITY AMONG COMPETITORS FROM TEAM SPORTS

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### ABSTRACT

The **purpose** of this study was to reveal the relationships between leadership style and satisfaction of athletes differentiated by sex, kind of sport, and sports results. **Method:** The research was done among 356 athletes practicing team sports (193 men, 163 women) with a mean age of 18.64 years ( $\pm 4.6$ ). We used the following questionnaires: Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) and Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ). **Results:** The structuring of team actions through training and instruction, being an aspect of satisfaction, was enhanced by the components of leadership style: social support ( $\beta=.218^{**}$ ), training and instruction ( $\beta=.530^{**}$ ), and was reduced by autocratic behavior ( $\beta=-.086^{**}$ ). Satisfaction with individual performance was enhanced by training and instruction ( $\beta=.272^{**}$ ) and social support ( $\beta=.226^{**}$ ). Social support ( $\beta=.262^{**}$ ), training and instruction ( $\beta=.243^{**}$ ), and autocratic behavior ( $\beta=.109^{**}$ ) increased satisfaction with team performance. Satisfaction with personal treatment decreased with the application of autocratic behavior ( $\beta=-.134^{**}$ ) and increased with social support ( $\beta=.353^{**}$ ) and positive feedback ( $\beta=.157^{**}$ ). **Conclusion:** The results of this study give grounds to assume that the coach's leadership style plays a significant role in shaping satisfaction with sports activities.

**Key words:** training and instruction, team performance, democratic, autocratic behavior

### INTRODUCTION

There are numerous scientific surveys on the importance of coaches' leadership style and its influence on sports results. One of the main tasks of the coach is to manage the team and help the athletes improve their sports performance. Coaches influence the team with their behavior, actions, decisions, and reactions. Chelladurai and Riemer (1) proposed a multidimensional model of leadership in sports based on the fundamental perceptions of leadership in different social spheres.

Numerous research in sports psychology has revealed a positive relationship between coaches' leadership style and satisfaction with sports

activity (2-4). Satisfaction is seen as a significant aspect of engaging in sports activities (5-9). Athlete satisfaction is seen as a quality of life or an attitude to the organization and management of the team. It is a necessary condition for participation in sports and a successful and long career. Lack of it can lead to redirection of the athlete to other areas of activity, containing potential conditions for success and satisfaction (10, 11). Satisfaction with the activity of a given sport is closely related to the subjective assessment of the athlete for the benefits of this activity, which are related to several main areas: self-knowledge, life experience, physical and mental health, public recognition and social contacts, satisfaction and inner harmony, personal cultivation.

### PURPOSE

The aim of this study was to reveal the relationships between leadership style and

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satisfaction of athletes differentiated by sex, kind of sport, and sports results.

**Participants:** The research was done among 356 athletes (193 men, 163 women) practicing team sports - volleyball, football, basketball, handball, rugby, field hockey, and baseball; with a mean age of 18.64 years ( $\pm 5.4$ ). There are 173 medal-winning athletes, and 183 are ranked after third place.

## METHODS

**1. Leadership Scale for Sport – LSS** (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), adapted to Bulgarian conditions (12). The test includes five subscales: training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback.

**2. Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire – ASQ**, adapted to Bulgarian conditions (13). The methodology used in this study consists of four subscales: training and instructions (satisfaction), team performance, individual performance, and personal treatment. Two of the subscales reflect

satisfaction with the training process, and the other two reflect satisfaction with the achievements. There is a coincidence between the subscale training sessions and instructions for the leadership style and the satisfaction with the sports activity. That is why, regarding satisfaction, the subscale was renamed to a training session and instructions (satisfaction).

SPSS 25.0 was used for statistical processing. A set of statistical procedures was applied: descriptive statistics, comparative analysis (Mann-Whitney (U) - for two samples, Kruskal-Wallis (H) test - for more than two groups of subjects), correlation, and regression analysis.

## RESULTS

As regards the leadership style, the leading subscales among the researched individuals were training and instructions ( $M=4.20$ ;  $SD=0.63$ ) and positive feedback ( $M=3.88$ ;  $SD=0.68$ ). Other studies have established similar trends (14-16). Authoritarian behavior had the lowest values ( $M=2.56$ ;  $SD=0.88$ ) (**Table 1**).

**Table 1.** Average values of the leadership style of the studied persons overall and grouped by sex

Variables	Training and instruction		Democratic behavior		Autocratic behavior		Social support		Positive feedback	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Athletes in the research	4.20	0.63	3.48	0.77	2.56	0.88	3.72	0.76	3.88	0.68
Women	4.22	0.78	<b>3.37</b>	0.78	<b>2.43</b>	0.82	3.74	0.78	<b>3.80</b>	0.71
Men	4.18	0.62	<b>3.57</b>	0.76	<b>2.67</b>	0.91	3.70	0.75	<b>3.95</b>	0.65

\*\* Darker numbers in this and the following tables indicate the presence of statistically significant differences in the studied variables between individual groups

The authoritarian leadership style was more frequent for the group of men ( $U=13058.000$ ;  $p=0.006$ ) (Mann-Whitney test). Also, the democratic style was reported more often ( $U=13271.500$ ;  $p=0.011$ ). In addition, the men received more often positive feedback ( $U=13838.500$ ;  $p=0.050$ ) than the female group. Regarding the kind of sport, there were statistically significant differences (Kruskal-Wallis test) along three of the subscales characterizing the leadership style: democratic behavior ( $H=6.158$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), social support ( $H=24.949$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), and autocratic behavior ( $H=13.410$ ;  $p=0.037$ ).

Baseball coaches apply training sessions and instructions ( $M= 4.52$ ;  $SD=0.24$ ), provide positive feedback ( $M=4.34$ ;  $SD=0.99$ ), apply most rarely authoritarian style ( $M= 2.13$ ;  $SD=0.79$ ), and provide social support ( $M= 3.16$ ;  $SD=0.36$ ). Rugby coaches apply an authoritarian style most often ( $M= 3.00$ ;  $SD=1.29$ ) but also provide social support ( $M= 4.09$ ;  $SD=0.59$ ). Field hockey coaches rarely resort to the democratic style ( $M= 3.24$ ;  $SD=0.87$ ) and the authoritarian style ( $M= 2.66$ ;  $SD=0.68$ ) (**Table 2**).

**Table 2.** Average values of leadership style according to the type of sport

Variables	Training and instruction		Democratic behavior		Autocratic behavior		Social support		Positive feedback	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Sports										
Volleyball	4.26	0.48	<b>3.37</b>	0.74	<b>2.39</b>	0.75	<b>3.85</b>	0.72	3.86	0.60
Basketball	4.21	0.43	<b>3.31</b>	0.59	<b>2.50</b>	0.63	<b>3.53</b>	0.67	3.90	0.56
Football	4.23	0.59	<b>3.44</b>	0.83	<b>2.56</b>	0.95	<b>3.67</b>	0.81	3.84	0.73
Handball	4.24	0.53	<b>3.83</b>	0.59	<b>2.70</b>	0.73	<b>3.85</b>	0.60	3.97	0.58
Rugby	4.10	0.83	<b>3.96</b>	0.70	<b>3.00</b>	1.23	<b>4.09</b>	0.59	4.04	0.58
Field hockey	3.76	1.09	<b>3.24</b>	0.87	<b>2.66</b>	0.68	<b>3.50</b>	1.04	3.59	0.99
Baseball	4.52	0.24	<b>3.27</b>	0.45	<b>2.13</b>	0.79	<b>3.16</b>	0.36	4.34	0.33

There were no statistically significant differences among the researched individuals depending on their ranking. The group of the medalists' activity is structured with training and instructions (M=4.24; SD=0.61), an authoritarian style (M=2.59; SD=0.84), and positive feedback

(M=3.91; SD=0.88), compared to those ranked after third place. The second group is more often subjected to a democratic style (M=3.52; SD=0.79) and social support (M=3.73; SD=0.78) (**Table 3**).

**Table 3.** Mean values of leadership style according to ranking

Variables	Training and instruction		Democratic behavior		Autocratic behavior		Social support		Positive feedback	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Medalists	4.24	0.61	3.43	0.76	2.59	0.84	3.71	0.75	3.91	0.64
Athletes ranked after 3rd place	4.16	0.64	3.52	0.79	2.53	0.91	3.73	0.78	3.86	0.72

As regards satisfaction with sports activity, the leading factors for the researched individuals were training sessions and instructions (satisfaction) (M=3.28; SD=0.66), as well as coaches' personal attitude to athletes (M=3.22;

SD=0.67). Similar trends have been established in other research (17-19).

The other two factors: the coaches' individual performance (M=3.13; SD=0.072) and team performance (M=2.97; SD=0.74), had lower values (**Table 4**).

**Table 4.** Average values of satisfaction of the studied persons overall and grouped by sex.

Variables	Training and Instruction (satisfaction)		Team performance		Individual performance		Personal treatment	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Athletes in the research	3.28	0.66	2.97	0.74	3.13	0.72	3.22	0.67
Women	3.25	0.68	<b>3.05</b>	0.80	3.10	0.74	3.20	0.73
Men	3.30	0.64	<b>2.90</b>	0.64	3.15	0.70	3.23	0.62

In the group of men, the factors revealing satisfaction had higher values: training sessions and instructions (satisfaction) (M=3.30; SD=0.64), individual performance (M=3.15; SD=0.70), and coaches' attitude toward athletes (M=3.23; SD=0.62), while the factor team performance (M=3.05; SD=0.80) was more

strongly expressed among the women. The comparative analysis of the experimental data showed statistically significant differences regarding team performance (U=13612.000; p=0.027) – the female group (M=3.05; SD=0.80) was statistically more satisfied than the male group (M=2.90; SD=0.64).

**Table 5.** Average values of satisfaction according to the sport.

Variables	Training and instruction (satisfaction)		Team performance		Individual performance		Personal treatment	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Sports								
Volleyball	<b>3.26</b>	0.60	<b>3.11</b>	0.74	3.11	0.74	<b>3.21</b>	0.66
Basketball	<b>3.32</b>	0.48	<b>2.81</b>	0.76	3.11	0.68	<b>3.26</b>	0.47
Football	<b>3.26</b>	0.69	<b>2.92</b>	0.73	3.05	0.71	<b>3.13</b>	0.72
Handball	<b>3.50</b>	0.56	<b>3.05</b>	0.73	3.44	0.53	<b>3.50</b>	0.44
Rugby	<b>3.22</b>	0.69	<b>3.10</b>	0.78	3.31	0.63	<b>3.41</b>	0.58
Field hockey	<b>2.80</b>	0.86	<b>2.96</b>	0.69	3.01	0.90	<b>2.82</b>	0.96
Baseball	<b>3.78</b>	0.42	<b>2.47</b>	0.58	3.11	0.81	<b>3.61</b>	0.37

As regards kinds of sport, there were statistically significant differences (Kruskal-Wallis test) regarding training sessions and instructions ( $H=22.902$ ;  $p=0.001$ ), team performance ( $H=14.195$ ;  $p=0.028$ ), and coaches' attitude toward athletes ( $H=18.126$ ;  $p=0.006$ ).

In the group of baseball players, the highest values were reported regarding training sessions and instructions ( $M=3.78$ ;  $SD=0.42$ ) and coaches' attitude toward athletes ( $M=3.61$ ;  $SD=0.37$ ), while hockey players reported the lowest values. Volleyball players ( $M=3.11$ ;  $SD=0.74$ ) and rugby

players ( $M=3.10$ ;  $SD=0.78$ ) were more satisfied with team performance. The values for the two groups were very similar (**Table 5**).

According to the ranking, there were statistically significant differences regarding team performance ( $U=12107.500$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and individual performance ( $U=13417.000$ ;  $p=0.012$ ) (**Table 6**). We found that among the medalists, the values of all the factors revealing satisfaction were higher than those obtained for those ranked after third place.

**Table 6.** Average values of satisfaction according to the ranking.

Variables	Training and instruction (satisfaction)		Team performance		Individual performance		Personal treatment	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Medalists	3.28	0.62	<b>3.12</b>	0.72	<b>3.21</b>	0.72	3.26	0.64
Athletes ranked after 3rd place	3.27	0.70	<b>2.82</b>	0.73	<b>3.05</b>	0.71	3.19	0.71

Correlation analysis (Spearman's test) was applied to reveal the relationships and interdependencies between the studied variables. The analysis of the experimental data showed certain interdependencies between the studied constructs (**Table 7**). Positive interrelationships were found between the leadership style components: training and instructions, democratic style, social support, and positive feedback, and the components of satisfaction with

the sports activity: training and instruction (satisfaction), team performance, individual performance, and coaches' personal treatment to the athlete. Similar trends have been established in other studies (21-22). In addition, negative correlations were found between the leadership style, its subscale authoritarian style, and the satisfaction component coaches' personal treatment toward athletes.

**Table 7.** The correlation analysis results between the leadership style components and satisfaction.

Variables	Training and instruction (satisfaction)	Team performance	Individual performance	Personal treatment
Training and instruction	0.588**	0.394**	0.403**	0.600**
Democratic behavior	0.353**	0.327**	0.336**	0.453**
Autocratic behavior				-0.113*
Social support	0.474**	0.422**	0.388**	0.580**
Positive feedback	0.456**	0.319**	0.323**	0.533**

\* p=.05; \*\* p=.01

A stepwise regression analysis was applied to reveal the influence of leadership style on satisfaction. The different types of leadership

style components are the independent variables. The components of satisfaction were analyzed systematically as dependent variables (**Table 8**).

**Table 8.** Results of regression analysis

Variables	Training and instruction				Social support				Autocratic behavior				Positive feedback			
	$\beta$	t	sig.	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	t	sig.	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	t	sig.	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	t	sig.	$\Delta R^2$
Training and instruction (satisfaction)	0.530	10.584	0.001	0.450	0.218	4.337	0.001	0.472	-	-	0.028	-	0.086	2.211		
Team performance	0.243	3.961	0.001	0.207	0.262	4.262	0.001	0.180	0.109	2.282	0.023	0.216				
Individual performance	0.272	4.446	0.001	0.170	0.226	3.695	0.001	0.198								
Personal treatment					0.353	6.835	0.001	0.508	-	-	0.001	0.522	0.157	2.876	0.004	0.531

The structuring of team actions through training and instruction, being an aspect of satisfaction, was enhanced by the components of leadership style: social support ( $\beta=0.218^{**}$ ), training and instruction ( $\beta=.530^{**}$ ), and was reduced by autocratic behavior ( $\beta=-.086^{**}$ ). Social support ( $\beta=.262^{**}$ ), training and instruction ( $\beta=.243^{**}$ ), and autocratic behavior ( $\beta=-.109^{**}$ ) increased satisfaction with team performance. Satisfaction with individual performance was enhanced by training and instruction ( $\beta=.272^{**}$ ) and social support ( $\beta=.226^{**}$ ). Satisfaction with personal treatment decreased with the application of autocratic behavior ( $\beta=-.134^{**}$ ) and increased

with social support ( $\beta=.353^{**}$ ) and positive feedback ( $\beta=.157^{**}$ ).

## CONCLUSION

The established trends in this research gave us grounds to accept that coaches' leadership style is vital in building athletes' satisfaction. Structuring teams' actions through training and instructions, providing social support, and positive feedback led to higher levels of satisfaction with sports activities among the researched individuals. Applying an authoritarian style of behavior decreases sports satisfaction, except for team performance which is enhanced by the authoritarian behavior. The obtained results about

the influence of leadership style on satisfaction with sports activity are of significant practical value. They are an essential reference point for the coaches about applying particular aspects of the leadership style aimed at building overall sports satisfaction related to high sports achievements.

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