

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AMONG ELITE MALE AND FEMALE GYMNASTS OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted on thirty five international gymnasts (nineteen males and sixteen females) who had represented the country in various International Gymnastics Championships during 2004-2008. The average age of males and females was 20.79 and 19.69. To collect data from the subjects, the Leadership Scale for Sport was used to measure the preferred and perceived leader behavior of male and female gymnasts on five dimensions of leader behaviour. The analysis of data revealed that: 1. Male and female gymnasts of International level expressed similar preferences on the set of five leader behaviour dimensions. 2. The actual leader behavior of international male gymnasts toward to coaches was found greater in democratic behavior (DB), social support (SS) positive feedback (PF) and autocratic behaviour (AB) than females. It indicated that most male gymnasts need more skill training and instructions. They all think that coaches should give more Training & Instruction Behavior (TI). Because the way of improve gymnastics skills is very complicated and need to be strengthened. 3. There was no discrepancy between preferred and perceived leader behaviour of international male gymnasts on five leader behaviour dimensions. Differences were found among international level female gymnasts between specific coaching behaviour and actual leader behaviour in social support (SS) and autocratic behaviour (AB).

Key words: Preferred, Perceived, Actual leader behaviour, Discrepancy, Specific coaching behaviour.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the attempt to influence the behavior of an individual or group. Why is leadership so important? (Heresy & Blanchard, 1982) a) According to Fiedler and Chemers (1974), "effective leaders' impact their organizations, and organizations without effective leadership are in trouble" ((Heresy & Blanchard, 1982) b) Almost every facet of society has demanded excellence, constantly striving to achieve more. Effective leadership is needed to generate profit, improve skills, and increase productivity in business, education, industry, and sport. Effective leaders have been crucial as they met the needs of their followers and propelled them to greater success.

A leader is an important director in an organization. The task for him (her) focuses on how to make employees contributing their knowledge and wisdom in the job. It is the same for a leader in a sport team. In the highly competitive athletic field, a leader needs to complete successful training schedules, and providing athletes competing skills in order to target the training objects. Furthermore, in order to handle a team, a leader also needs to train the EQ (Emotional Intelligence) management since a leader can be a friend, a consultant, a manager, a psychologist, and a funds collector of athletes. Sometimes, it also can influence athletes' behavior and be a model for imitating. Chen (1995) indicated the behavior, attitude and value standard of a leader can influence athletes' imitating behavior (Chi-Fu Cheng, 1997; Coste, Salmela & Russell, 1995). The reason that a coach can influence athletes is the job of coach is much more diversify, he (she) needs to react quickly when they face different problems come across to him /her (Hoai-Chi Yuen, 1997). Generally speaking, coaches' training and teaching method both can influence the emotion management of athletes (Chi-Chung Chen, 1998).

According to the past report, it indicated that a coach should be demanding, well organized, behaves well and highly achieved in the sport field (Ogilvie & Tutko, 1966, Sage, 1973). Further, historian named a coach as a new professional manager because they think the skills improvement from athlete came from the contribution of a coach. The research of coach leadership we called multidimensional model in India, now is adapted widely for finding out the interaction in a coach, an athlete and situation. As to the leadership of coaches, it related to the achievement and personality of an athlete. Moreover, leadership for athletes in different levels and sex has interaction. Comparing with male athletes, female athletes pay more attention to social support. Meanwhile, athletes who attend touchable sport training prefer democratic behavior than athletes who attend non-touchable sport training. Thus, coaches need to devote into how to create harmony feedback, and strengthen the psycho- physical force.

In order to measure leader behavior, several researchers (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Fleishman, 1957; Halpin & Viner, 1957; Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Zhang, 1993) have attempted to develop instruments to measure this behavior. These instruments have been used to examine leader behaviors in the military, industry, education, organizations, and athletics. One of the first of such instruments was developed at the Ohio State University by Chelladurai and Saleh (1978 and 1980) to measure leader behaviors specifically in athletics... Five factors of the 40 items were identified to measure coach leadership behaviors. The five factors were: Training and Instruction Behavior (TI), Autocratic Behavior (AB), Democratic Behavior (DB), Social Support Behavior (SS), and Positive Feedback Behavior (PF).

Lee and Lee (1993) found that Korean athletes involved in individual sports, combative sports, and team sports differed among themselves in all dimensions except in preferred training

and instruction. Individual sports athletes preferred and perceived more democratic behaviour from their coaches than did the other two groups.

Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) found that the congruence between preferred and actual behaviours in the autocratic behaviour and positive feedback dimensions effected satisfaction with the coach in a curvilinear manner (i.e. member were less satisfied when the actual behaviour deviated from preferred behaviour in either direction). Also, members were more satisfied with the coaches when his or her training and instruction behaviour exceeded their preferences.

Schliesman (1987) found that perceived democratic behaviour and social support were positively related to general satisfaction with leadership. Also the discrepancy scores in training and instruction. Social support and positive feedback were significantly related to satisfaction with the three leader behaviours respectively.

Sharma (1989) found that there were no differences between the preferences for specific leadership behaviour of swimmers and actual behaviour of coaches on the following aspects of leadership i.e. appreciation, independent plan, uniform training, spot appreciation, free communications, goal setting, personal favours, self correction of mistakes, self evaluation and due credit. The significant differences between the preferences for specific leadership behavior of swimmers and actual behavior of the coaches on the leadership variables like knowledge about skills, teaching of skills, finding out and corrections of mistakes, length and frequencies of training, knowledge of strategies and tactics and the procedures of implementation of these strategies at specific movements of competition.

Sherman and Fuller (2000) investigated the preferred coaching behaviors of athletes from three distinct Australian sporting contexts. The coaching preferences of 317 athletes Results revealed an

overwhelmingly high level of similarity in the coaching preferences between all athletes regardless of gender. Athletes from all three sports indicated that positive feedback, training and instruction and democratic behavior were preferred coaching behaviors. Social support, and autocratic behavior were not preferred.

Lam (2007) indicated that female basketball players preferred a higher degree of (a) democratic behavior, (b) social support, (c) positive feedback, (d) situational consideration, and (e) teaching and instruction but a lower degree of autocratic behavior than what they perceived from their coaches. Male basketball players preferred a higher degree of (a) social support, (b) situational consideration, and (c) teaching and instruction than what they perceived from their coaches.

Generally speaking, the leadership of coaches related to the performance of the games & athletes, training programmers, performance of the whole group...etc. Recently, the research focuses on the highly goals achieved coaches and athletes. However, the research related to the quantity seems not enough. How to clarify the relationship between coaches and athletes, shorten the expectation of athletes and the difference between the ideal and real leadership of coaches motivated me involving in doing the research.

There has been much research done on comparing male and female athlete preferences and perceptions on coaching leadership behaviors. Few researchers have attempted to examine preferences and perceptions of Gymnasts for specific leadership behaviors of coach and actual leadership behaviors of Gymnasts. Hence keeping the above facts in mind, this study attempted to examine the differences of male and female gymnasts preferences and perceptions of coach leadership behaviors as measured by the LSS and whether their achievement level, level of performance or training has some influence on preferred and perceived leadership behaviour

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

The subjects of the study were 35 male and females gymnasts, who had represented the country in various International Gymnastics Championships. The athletes consisted of 19 male gymnasts and 16 female gymnasts. Coaches of the selected gymnasts in senior national championship were contacted to obtain permission to meet the athletes, inform them of the nature of the study and invite them to participate this study. Players filled LSS to determine their preference and perception of leadership behaviors of their coaches. The mean age of males and females was 20.79 ± 2.31 and 19.69 ± 2.79 respectively

INSTRUMENTS

To collect data from subjects, Leadership Behavior preferred and perceived versions of Chelladurai, (1994). Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) was used to assess the leader behaviors of Indian male and female gymnasts of international level. These 40-item scales measure 5 dimensions of leadership behavior: training and instruction behavior (13 items), democratic behavior (9 items), autocratic behavior (5 items), social support behavior (8 items), and positive feedback behavior (5 items) through both a preference ("I prefer my coach to...") and a perceived version ("my coach to...") version. The items are assigned a score between 1 and 5 (1= never, 5 = always).

Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) reported the internal consistency ranged from .45 (autocratic behavior) to .83 (training and instruction) in preferred version and from .79 (autocratic behavior) to .93 (training and instruction) in perceived version Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, 1951) of the LSS for the current study ranged from .65 (autocratic behavior) to .91 (training and instruction) for the preference version, and .74 (autocratic behavior) to .88 (social support).

PROCEDURE

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the differences between the international male and female gymnasts in preferred and perceived leadership. The discrepancy between the male and female international gymnasts in preferred and perceived leadership was also investigated. . All subjects filled out an informed consent form before answering any of the items on the questionnaire. The instructions for the LSS were thoroughly explained and each subject was informed that the information gathered from the study would be anonymous. The coaches and subjects were contacted personally at the site of championships. Respondents were called to a common place, when they were not busy and had enough time to spare for testing. Necessary instructions were given to the subjects before the administration of each test. No time limit was set for completion of the questionnaires, once the instructions clearly understood by them; preference version and perceived version questionnaire were given one after another with a short interval to the gymnasts. The completed questionnaires were collected from the gymnasts and it was verified that no questionnaire was left without being answered.

RESULTS

To find out the significance of differences among International level male and female gymnasts along with five dimensions of leader behaviour of preferred and perceived leadership, means, standard deviations, and t-ratios were computed. Level of significance was set at .05 level. The results of the study are presented in Table 1 and 4.

Finding of the descriptive data of male and female gymnasts of international level on the set of five dimensions of preferred and perceived leadership indicated that male gymnasts preferred more on training and instruction ($M = 4.432 \pm 0.374$)

followed by positive feedback ($M=4.105\pm0.571$), social supports ($M=3.946\pm0.799$), democratic behaviour ($M=3.805\pm0.598$), and autocratic behavior ($M=3.389\pm0.796$) from their coaches. The actual leader behavior of male gymnasts of international level, they also perceived more on training and instruction ($M=4.433\pm0.414$) followed by positive feedback ($M=4.205\pm0.552$), social supports ($M=4.007\pm0.544$), democratic behaviour ($M=3.811\pm0.574$), and autocratic behavior ($M=3.316\pm0.743$) from their coaches. In case of female gymnasts of international level on the set of five dimensions of preferred and perceived leadership indicated that female gymnasts preferred more on training and instruction ($M=4.216\pm0.557$) followed by social supports ($M=3.970\pm0.564$), positive feedback ($M=3.962\pm0.633$), democratic behaviour ($M=3.499\pm0.576$), and autocratic behaviour ($M=3.075\pm0.903$) from their coaches. The actual leader behavior of female gymnasts of international level, they also perceived more on training and instruction ($M=4.062\pm0.714$) followed by positive feedback ($M=3.625\pm0.521$), social supports ($M=3.367\pm0.374$), democratic behaviour ($M=3.264\pm0.668$), and autocratic behaviour ($M=2.600\pm0.566$) from their coaches; see Table-1 (P-93).

To find out the significance of difference between means of preferences on leader behaviour dimensions of male and female gymnasts; see Figure1), t-ratio was computed. International level male and female gymnasts did not differ significantly on any of the dimensions of leader behaviour, as the t-ratio for training and instruction (1.32), democratic behaviour (1.54), autocratic behaviour (1.08), social supports (0.019), and positive feedback (0.698) were less than the required t-value to be significant; see Table-2, (P-95).

To find out the significance of difference between means of perceptions on leader behaviour dimensions of male and female gymnasts; see Figure-2, pp.95, t-ratio was computed. International level male and female gymnasts had significantly different

perceptions on democratic behaviour (2.57), autocratic behaviour (3.23), social supports (3.56), and positive feedback (3.19) with male gymnasts perceiving higher amount of behaviour from their coaches in these dimensions. The difference in perceived training and instruction (1.33) was not statistically significant; see Table-3.

The analysis of data revealed there were significant differences in preferred and perceived autocratic behaviour (2.10), and social supports (3.14) dimensions of international level female gymnasts. In case of international level male gymnasts, obtained t-ratios for the training and instruction (0.773), democratic behaviour (0.032) and autocratic behaviour (0.292)), social supports (0.276), and positive feedback (0.549) dimensions of leader behaviour were not significant. In case of international level female gymnasts, obtained t-ratios for the training and instruction (0.672), democratic behaviour (1.08) and positive feedback (1.652) dimensions of leader behaviour were not also significant; see Table 4 (P-93).

DISCUSSION

To see whether male and female gymnasts at each level taken independently, have different preferences on leader behavior dimensions; it was found that International male and female gymnasts on set-of five dimensions of leader behavior produced insignificant university analysis of variance. This similarity of preferences at top level of competition may be attributed to the possible similarity of attitude, style and competitive orientation of male and female gymnasts at international level.

When the International male and female gymnasts were compared together on dimensions of leader behavior, they had significant differences in all the dimensions, except training and

instruction. Which may be due to variations in practice methods, coaching style, interpersonal relationship and reinforcement? It showed that International male gymnasts perceived their coaches more in democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support and positive feedback in comparison of International female gymnasts, equally perceived their coaches in training and instruction.

When male and female gymnasts of three different levels were compared on preferred and perceived leadership, it revealed that there was no discrepancy between preferred behavior and perceived (actual) behavior of international male gymnasts on five dimensions of leader behavior. Significant differences between preferences and perceptions were observed on social support and autocratic

Behavior dimensions of leader behavior among International female gymnasts, means, they preferred more concerned for their welfare group atmosphere, warm interpersonal relationship along with independent decision making and control on training from their coaches. This was partially supported by Sherpa and Horne and Carron.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Male and female gymnasts of International level expressed similar preferences on the set of five leader behavior dimensions.
2. International male gymnasts perceived more democratic behavior, social support, feedback and autocratic behavior than their female counter parts.
3. There was no discrepancy between preferred and perceived leader behavior of International male gymnasts on five leader behavior dimensions, whereas International level female gymnasts expressed differences between their preference sand perceptions on social support and autocratic behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, It is recommended that future studies:

1. Examine athlete experience of different coaches and athlete preferences to determine if there is a correlation between athlete experience and coaching behavior preferences.
2. Examine athlete preferences in comparison to athlete satisfaction and performance.
3. Apply the LSS to different sports and competition levels to expand the research on coaching leadership behaviors.
4. The research is mainly focuses on the domestic athletes, so, the further research can consider about comparing with international athletes.
5. The research only adapted factor-analysis method. It can adapt more analysis like result-analysis according to coaches' personality and understand the difference of athletes' feeling and body energy. It can be looked as important direction for the further research.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Preferences and Perception on Five Dimensions of Gymnasts of Male and Female Indian Gymnasts of International Level

Leader Behaviour		Preferences		Perceptions	
		Male N=19)	Female (N=16)	Male (N=19)	Female (N=16)
Training & Instruction	M	4.432	4.216	4.433	4.062
	SD	0.374	0.557	0.414	0.714
Democratic Behaviour	M	3.805	3.499	3.811	3.264
	SD	0.598	0.576	0.574	0.668
Autocratic Behaviour	M	3.389	3.075	3.316	2.600
	SD	0.796	0.903	0.743	0.566
Social Supports	M	3.946	3.970	3.316	3.367
	SD	0.799	0.564	0.544	0.512
Positive Feedback	M	4.105	3.962	4.205	3.625
	SD	0.571	0.633	0.552	0.521

Table 2

Significance of Difference between Mean Scores of Male and Female Gymnasts on Leader Behaviour Dimensions of Preferred Leadership

Leader Behaviour	Sex	Mean	MD	^G DM	t-ratio
Training & Instruction	Male	4.432	0.215	0.086	1.32
	Female	4.216		0.139	
Democratic Behaviour	Male	3.805	0.306	0.137	1.54
	Female	3.499		0.144	
Autocratic Behaviour	Male	3.389	0.314	0.183	1.08
	Female	3.075		0.226	

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Social Supports	Male	3.946	0.006	0.183	0.02
	Female	3.970		0.141	
Positive Feedback	Male	4.105	0.143	0.131	0.78
	Female	3.962		0.158	

Insignificant at .05 level, t.05 (33) = 2.03

Table 3

Significance of Difference between Mean Scores of Male and Female Gymnasts on Leader Behaviour Dimensions of Perceived Leadership

Leader Behaviour	Sex	Mean	MD	^G DM	t-ratio
Training & Instruction	Male	4.333	0.271	0.095	1.33
	Female	4.062		0.179	
Democratic Behaviour	Male	3.811	0.547	0.132	2.57*
	Female	3.264		0.167	
Autocratic Behaviour	Male	3.316	0.716	0.171	3.23*
	Female	2.600		0.141	
Social Supports	Male	4.007	0.640	0.125	3.56*
	Female	3.367		0.130	
Positive Feedback	Male	4.205	0.584	0.127	3.19*
	Female	3.625		0.130	

Significant at .05 level, t.05 (33) = 2.03

Table 4

Significance of Difference between Mean Scores of Male and Female Gymnasts on Leader Behaviour Dimensions of Preferred and Perceived Leadership

Leader Behaviour	Sex	Mean Preference	Mean Perception	MD	^G DM	t-ratio
Training & Instruction	Male	4.432	4.333	0.099	0.128	0.773
	Female	4.216	4.062	0.154	0.229	0.672
Democratic Behaviour	Male	3.805	3.811	0.006	0.190	0.032
	Female	3.499	3.264	0.237	0.220	1.080
Autocratic Behaviour	Male	3.389	3.316	0.250	0.250	0.292
	Female	3.075	2.600	0.266	0.266	2.100*
Social Supports	Male	3.946	4.007	0.221	0.221	0.276
	Female	3.970	3.367	0.192	0.192	3.140*
Positive Feedback	Male	4.105	4.205	0.182	0.182	0.546
	Female	3.962	3.625	0.204	0.204	1.652

Significant at .05 level, $t_{.05}(30) = 2.04$

Figure 1. Mean scores of international male and female gymnasts on five dimensions of leader behaviour of preferred leadership

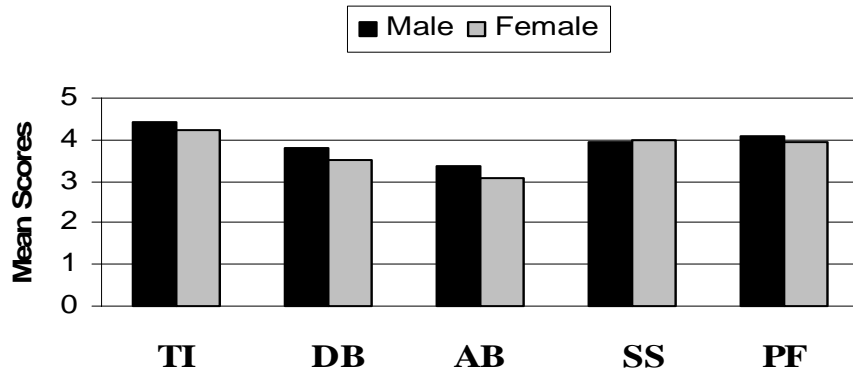


Figure 2. Mean scores of international male and female gymnasts on five dimensions of leader behaviour of perceived leadership

