

# Sports Coach Leadership Style, Coach-Athletes Relationships Motivation and Satisfaction among Malaysian Teacher Education Institute Athletes

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## Abstract

The objective of this research was to investigate the correlation between coach leadership style, coach-athlete relationships, motivation, and satisfaction among athletes from the Southern Zone Malaysia Teacher Education Institute participating in the Sports Council Championship (MSIPGM). The participants in this research consist of a cohort of 190 athletes who were administered a Google Form questionnaire through either the WhatsApp or Telegram messaging applications. The survey included many established measurement tools, including the Leadership Sports Scale (LSS; Chelladurai & Salleh, 1980), CART-Q (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004), the Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-II; Pelletier et al., 2013), and the Satisfaction Scale For Athletes (SSA) (Caliskan & Baydar, 2016). The results of the internal consistency test revealed a range of alpha coefficients between 0.78 and 0.90. Additionally, the p-values obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality test were found to be greater than 0.05, specifically ranging from 0.126 to 0.260. The use of the Pearson correlation was employed to assess and interpret the results, given that the data has a normal distribution. The study's results indicated that Pearson's Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant inverse association between autocratic leadership style and coach-athlete relationships, athlete motivation, and athlete satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the present study, it was shown that a significant correlation exists between the democratic leadership style and several aspects of the coach-athlete interaction, athlete motivation, and athlete satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). Several recommendations have been deliberated upon with regards to improving the performance of athletes in the context of coach leadership style at the Malaysia Teacher Education Institute.

**Keywords:** Leadership Style, Coach, Relationships, Motivation, Satisfaction, Athletes.

**Introduction**

The operational performance and growth trajectory of any given organisation are contingent upon the attributes shown by its leaders. In order to effectively oversee an organisation, it is imperative to possess not just a clear vision and the ability to effectively communicate that vision, but also the aptitude to motivate others inside the organisation. The need for effective leadership is apparent (Chen et al., 2018). Over the course of many years, there have been various shifts in what constitutes effective leadership (Kjellström et al., 2020). Leadership styles may be described as the distinctive behaviours or patterns of behaviour shown by a leader while they are leading, guiding, and inspiring groups of individuals. These characteristics possess the capacity to exert influence on the actions and behaviours of their followers, therefore offering an answer to the question of how leaders may successfully lead. The research was done by Aboramadan and Dahleez (2020).

The existing corpus of literature on leadership style has seen substantial expansion in several cultural settings. The empirical study conducted by Kelly and MacDonald (2019) aimed to examine the relationship between different leadership styles and their impact on staff job engagement and leadership effectiveness. The authoritarian mode of government has shown its inherent limitations. According to the research conducted by Giau and Hung (2018), the laissez-faire leadership style is found to be linked with some advantageous results, while it does not guarantee overall success in leadership. Nevertheless, academic research in the field of sports has devoted considerable focus to the examination of coaching leadership and coaching behaviours and their impact on various athlete outcomes (Horn, 2008; Kavussanu et al., 2008; Myers et al., 2006; Szedlak et al., 2015). Based on previous scholarly investigations, it has been shown that possessing strong leadership abilities is vital for coaches in order to establish a harmonious equilibrium between power dynamics and trust, enabling them to have a constructive and influential impact on players (Laurent & Bradney, 2007).

According to research by Chelladurai (2007), there are three distinct leadership models that may be used in the study of coaches' leadership behaviours: the Multidimensional Model, the Mediational Model, and the Normative Model of Coaching Decisions. According to research by Chelladurai (1984), athletes are more satisfied with their coach's leadership when their desired and preferred leadership behaviours are consistent with reality. This, in turn, leads to peak performance and satisfaction, and ultimately, enjoyment of the sport. Athletes' impressions of coaches' leadership styles have been used as proxies for coaches' real leadership styles in the past, however, this one-sided approach has been shown to be inaccurate (Posner, 1999). The performance of a team may be attributed to the leadership style of the coach, as supported by past scholarly research (Jowett, 2017). Chee et al. (2017) provide a definition of leadership as a behavioural process that exercises control over the behaviours of people or groups within organisations, with the aim of attaining particular objectives and accomplishing those goals.

*The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between leadership style, coach-athletes relationships, athlete motivation, and athlete satisfaction. Six hypotheses have been tested*

H<sub>1</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship.

- H<sub>2</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' motivation.
- H<sub>3</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' satisfaction
- H<sub>4</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship.
- H<sub>5</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' motivation.
- H<sub>6</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' satisfaction

### **Methodology**

The present study employs a quantitative research approach, including both a descriptive study to gather demographic data from respondents and an inferential study to compare the demographic features of the respondents. The research sample consisted of 320 athletes participating in the Southern Zone Malaysia Teacher Education Institute Sports Council (MSIPGM) Championship. The sample size for the study was determined to be 190 individuals, using the guidelines proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire including four distinct sections.

The demographic section of Part A encompasses information regarding the subject's age, gender, type of sport, and sports category. Sections B to D, on the other hand, consist of a total of 50 items. Among these items, 14 are specifically designed to assess autocratic and democratic leadership behaviour, as derived from the Leadership Sports Scale (LSS; Chelladurai & Salleh, 1980). Additionally, 11 items are utilised to measure the coach-athlete relationship, drawing from the CART-Q (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). Another 9 items are employed to gauge autonomous motivation, utilising the Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-II; Pelletier et al., 2013) and 16 items to measure satisfaction adapted from Satisfaction Scale For Athletes (SSA) (Caliskan & Baydar, 2016).

The process of data gathering will be conducted in collaboration with the management and coaches associated with all teams in the MSIPGM South Zone, with their explicit consent. Once the necessary permission has been obtained, the researcher will proceed to provide a Google Form link containing the questionnaires using either the WhatsApp or Telegram application. The researcher will provide a designated time period to provide respondents with sufficient time and a conducive environment to answer the questionnaire without any disruptions. The data was examined using parametric tests, and statistical analyses were conducted on the acquired data using SPSS Version 27.

The internal consistency test demonstrated an alpha range of 0.78 to 0.90 in practical use. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2003), an item may be deemed highly reliable if its alpha value surpasses 0.60. Additionally, the study has a sample size of above 50, and the researchers have used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to assess the data distribution. Based on the outcomes of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality test shown in Table 1, it is seen that the significance level (sig.) or p-value exceeds 0.05, falling within the range of 0.126 to 0.260. Consequently, it can be inferred that the data under investigation follows a normal

distribution. As a consequence, the Pearson correlation were used to analyse and interpret the findings.

Table 1

*Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality and internal consistency test*

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig.	Cronbach's coefficient $\alpha$
Autocratic Leadership Style	0.26	190	0.126	0.78
Democratic Leadership Style	0.12	190	0.260	0.80
Coach-Athlete Relationship	0.17	190	0.168	0.90
Athlete Motivation	0.22	190	0.213	0.88

**Result and Discussion*****Demographics***

A total of 190 athletes were surveyed and there are 117 female respondents and 73 men who respectively represent 61.6% and 38.4% of the total respondents. The data in Table 2 shows that a total of 52 respondents from the 190 athletes who have participated in this study engage in volleyball. In addition, a total of 33 respondents played hockey and a total of 20 respondents are football players. For netball, a total of 38 players have participated in this study. A total of 22 respondents are badminton players and finally, the remaining 25 respondents played pétanque.

Table 2

*Gender and sports type analysis*

Gender	Total	Percentage
Male	73	38.4
Female	117	61.6
Total	190	100
Sports Type	Total	Percentage
Volleyball	52	27.4
Hockey	33	17.4
Football	20	10.5
Netball	38	20.0
Badminton	22	11.6
Pétanque	25	13.2
Total	190	100

***Coach Leadership Style***

Based on Table 3, Overall, the mean value obtained for this leadership style is low which is 1.56 with a standard deviation of 0.752. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the coaches involved do not fully adopt an autocratic leadership style. Most coaches in this study practice a democratic leadership style instead of an autocratic style. A high mean value was recorded as a whole which was 4.09 with a standard deviation value of 0.735. Therefore, it

can be concluded that most coaches who are indirectly involved in this study have a democratic leadership style.

Table 3

*Analysis of Leadership Style*

Coach's Autocratic Leadership Style	M	$\sigma$	Level
Work relatively independent of the athletes	1.83	1.152	
Not explain his action	1.34	0.662	
Refuse to compromise a point	1.67	0.897	
Keep to himself	1.61	0.739	
Speak in a manner not to be questioned	1.34	0.656	
Total	1.56	0.752	Low
Coach's Democratic Leadership Style	min	$\sigma$	
Ask for the opinion of the athletes on strategies for specific competitions	4.06	1.085	
Get group approval on important matters before going ahead	4.39	0.815	
Let his athletes share in decision-making	4.28	0.960	
Encourage athletes to make suggestions for ways of conducting practices	4.00	0.987	
Let the group set its own goals	3.65	1.237	
Let the athletes try their own way even if they make mistakes	4.07	0.793	
Ask for the opinion of athletes on important coaching matters	4.28	0.960	
Let athletes work at their own speed	4.39	0.815	
Let the athletes decide on the plays to be used in the game	3.65	1.237	
Total	4.09	0.735	High

***Relationship between leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship, athlete motivation and athletes' satisfaction***

Table 4 shows that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between Coach's Autocratic Leadership Style and, coach-athlete relationship (-.623), athlete motivation (-.723), and athletes' satisfaction (-.733). Democratic Leadership Style has a significant positive relationship with the coach-athlete relationship (.733), athlete motivation (.817), and athletes' satisfaction (.757).

Table 4

*Pearson correlation analysis*

			Coach- Athlete Relationship	Athlete Motivation	Athletes Satisfaction
Coach's Leadership Style	Autocratic	Pearson correlation	-.623** .001	-.723** .001	-.733** .000
Coach's Leadership Style	Democratic	Significant (2- way)	.733** .000	.817** .001	.757** .001
N			190	190	190

**\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-way).**

*H<sub>1</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship.*

A statistically significant negative relationship between a sports coach's autocratic leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship implies that as the coach's autocratic tendencies increase, the quality of the coach-athlete relationship tends to decrease. This concept is in line with established research in sports psychology and leadership studies. The study conducted by Adviento (2016) showed a significant impact of coaches' leadership styles on players. From a sports psychology standpoint, as the discipline progresses, there is a growing body of research and practise development in the subject of sports psychology that encompasses many cultures and geographic regions.

Autocratic coaches tend to make decisions unilaterally and may not actively seek input from athletes. This lack of communication can hinder the development of trust and mutual understanding between the coach and athletes. Autocratic coaches also often exert strict control over training regimens, playing strategies, and other aspects of athletes' performance. This can lead to a sense of disempowerment and frustration among athletes, potentially eroding the coach-athlete relationship. Athletes under an autocratic coach may experience higher levels of stress and anxiety due to the strict and controlling environment. This can negatively impact their mental well-being and the coach-athlete relationship.

Research in sports psychology and coaching has shown that more participative and democratic coaching styles often lead to more positive coach-athlete relationships, better athlete satisfaction, and improved performance outcomes. Coaches who are willing to collaborate, communicate, and involve athletes in decision-making processes tend to foster stronger and more productive relationships. It's important to note that the relationship between leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship can vary based on individual athletes' preferences, team culture, and the specific sport or context. However, in general, a statistically significant negative relationship between autocratic coaching and the coach-athlete relationship is consistent with the existing literature in this field.

*H<sub>2</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' motivation.*

Research in the field of sports psychology has indeed shown a statistically significant negative relationship between a coach's autocratic leadership style and athlete motivation. According to Orlick and Partington (1988), it has been observed that the success of elite athletes in championship events is contingent upon their mental preparedness rather than their physical abilities. In conjunction with suitable training methodologies, state-of-the-art training apparatus, and complete medical assistance, athletes need to prioritise the development of their cognitive abilities to optimise their performance outcomes. Previous research has shown that positive leadership practises include a shift from authoritarian management to positive communication, as well as the use of positive encouragement to affirm people and foster their self-worth. This approach aims to facilitate the development of good interpersonal interactions among individuals (Cameron, 2012). The topic under discussion has garnered significant scholarly interest within the field of sport leadership research, as shown by the works of Peachey et al. (2015) and Kihl et al. (2010).

An autocratic coaching style, characterized by a top-down approach with strict control and minimal athlete input, tends to diminish athlete motivation in various ways. Intrinsic motivation, the internal drive to engage in an activity for the sheer joy or satisfaction it brings, can be stifled by autocratic coaching. When athletes are constantly told what to do and how to do it, they may lose the enjoyment and passion they once had for their sport. Athletes are more likely to be committed to their goals when they have a say in setting them. Autocratic coaches often set goals unilaterally, which can lead to decreased goal commitment and, subsequently, lower motivation to achieve those goals. Athletes may resist the demands of an autocratic coach, which can result in frustration, apathy, or a desire to disengage from training and competition.

Conversely, coaching styles that are more democratic, supportive, and empowering tend to foster greater athlete motivation. These styles involve athletes in decision-making, provide opportunities for skill development and mastery, and create a more positive and enjoyable training environment. It's important to note that the relationship between coaching style and athlete motivation can vary based on individual athlete preferences, personality traits, and the specific context of the sport. However, the statistically significant negative relationship between autocratic coaching and athlete motivation is a well-established finding in sports psychology research.

*H<sub>3</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' satisfaction*

Athletes' satisfaction with their sports experience is influenced by various factors, and an autocratic coaching style can have detrimental effects in this regard. Enjoyment and satisfaction in sports are closely linked. The leadership style is a dynamic social mechanism that requires effective communication on the part of the coach since it has a significant influence on players. Hence, sports leadership plays a crucial role not only in overseeing the organisation and administration of sports but also in the direct supervision of coaches who are responsible for guiding and mentoring players. Jawoosh et al. (2022) argue that style leadership plays a crucial role in attaining success across many domains and objectives. In the realm of sports, it is important to take into account the congruence between the coach's leadership style and the level of happiness experienced by athletes in order to attain collective triumph.

When athletes have a coach who is overly controlling and does not allow for enjoyment, their overall satisfaction with the sport can decline. Effective communication is crucial for a positive coach-athlete relationship and athlete satisfaction. Autocratic coaches may not provide the necessary communication channels, leading to misunderstandings, dissatisfaction, and mistrust. In team sports, an autocratic coaching style can hinder team cohesion and unity. When athletes are dissatisfied with the coaching approach, it can affect their relationships with teammates and overall team dynamics. On the other hand, coaching styles that are more democratic, supportive, and empowering tend to lead to greater athlete satisfaction.

These coaching styles involve athletes in decision-making, emphasize open communication, and create a positive and enjoyable training environment. It's important to recognize that the relationship between coaching style and athlete satisfaction can vary based on individual athlete preferences, the sport in question, and the specific context. However, the statistically significant negative relationship between autocratic coaching and athletes' satisfaction is a well-documented finding in sports psychology research. Coaches who aim to enhance athlete satisfaction should consider adopting more participatory and athlete-centered coaching approaches.

*H<sub>4</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship.*

The result has shown that there is indeed a statistically significant positive relationship between a sports coach's democratic leadership style and the coach-athlete relationship. Athletes establish interpersonal connections with a diverse range of persons within their squad, including teammates, parents, and coaches. In many top sports environments, young athletes often allocate a significant portion of their time to interacting with coaches, surpassing the amount of time they spend with their parents. The quality of the coach-athlete connection in these settings has considerable significance, as it directly impacts the athletes' skill development and competitive prowess (Jowett, 2017). In their study, Foulds et al. (2019) provided a definition for the coach-athlete interaction, characterising it as a dynamic interplay between the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of both coaches and athletes, which mutually influence and correspond with one another. The significance of comprehending behaviour and connections between coaches and athletes lies in the recognition of the pivotal role played by behavioural, emotive, and cognitive factors in leadership, as asserted by the individuals.

A democratic coaching style, which emphasizes collaboration, communication, and athlete involvement in decision-making, tends to foster stronger and more positive coach-athlete relationships. Democratic coaches encourage open and honest communication between themselves and their athletes. This two-way communication fosters trust, mutual understanding, and a sense of partnership in achieving goals. The collaborative nature of a democratic coaching style contributes to the development of a positive coach-athlete relationship. Coaches and athletes work together as a team, and this partnership strengthens their connection and mutual respect. When conflicts or challenges arise, democratic coaches are often better equipped to address them constructively. They involve athletes in resolving issues and finding solutions, which can improve team dynamics and maintain a positive atmosphere.

*H<sub>5</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' motivation.*

The result has shown a statistically significant positive relationship between a sports coach's democratic leadership style and athletes' motivation. Motivation has been identified as an important factor in influencing athlete success (Vallerand, 2007). Motivation is also seen to affect the performance of athletes (Mallet, 2005), cognitive (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and behavioral (Li et al., 2021). A democratic coaching style, which emphasizes collaboration, communication, and athlete involvement in decision-making, tends to enhance athlete motivation in several ways. Athletes coached in a democratic style are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, which is linked to a genuine enjoyment of the sport and a desire to improve for its own sake. This type of motivation is associated with greater persistence and effort. Democratic coaches often provide constructive feedback and encouragement that reinforces athletes' motivation. This positive reinforcement can contribute to a supportive and motivating coaching environment. Athletes who have a say in setting their goals tend to be more committed to achieving them. This commitment drives their motivation to work toward those goals. Some athletes may respond differently to coaching styles, and there may be situations where a more directive approach is appropriate. However, in most cases, coaches who adopt a democratic leadership style create an environment that nurtures athlete motivation and overall satisfaction.

*H<sub>6</sub> There is a significant relationship between autocratic leadership style and athletes' satisfaction*

Athlete satisfaction is seen as a key reflection of many coaching characteristics including coach personality (Yang et al., 2015), physical behavior (Davis et al., 2019), and leadership style (Kim et al., 2020). Therefore, considering the athlete's satisfaction is an important thing that coaches need to focus on to ensure athletes under their supervision achieve success and get effective training results from implementing various leadership styles. Riemer and Toon (2001) reveal that an athlete's ability level influences their choices in the type of leadership behavior and level of satisfaction. Weiss and Friedrichs (1986) found that democratic leadership style has a positive impact on satisfaction among college athletes. Motivation is considered an important factor in improving the performance of athletes, many research has been conducted to see if the coach's behavior like making decisions, rewards, and feedback methods affects athlete motivation (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

A democratic coaching style, which emphasizes collaboration, communication, and athlete involvement in decision-making, tends to contribute to higher levels of athlete satisfaction. In team sports, a democratic coaching style can lead to better team cohesion and harmony. When athletes are satisfied with their coaching experience, it positively affects team dynamics and overall team satisfaction. Athletes coached in a democratic manner often have a stronger sense of progress and development. This sense of improvement contributes to their overall satisfaction with their athletic journey. Athletes who are satisfied with their coaching experience are more likely to be committed to their sport and team. This commitment can lead to greater effort and dedication, further contributing to success and satisfaction. However, in most cases, coaches who adopt a democratic leadership style create an environment that nurtures athlete satisfaction and overall positive experiences in sports.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the correlation between a sports coach's leadership style and the coach-athlete connection, athlete happiness, and player motivation is intricate and noteworthy. Malaysia Teacher Education Institute coaches play a crucial role in the development and success of athletes. Their leadership style can significantly impact the coach-athlete relationship, athlete satisfaction, and athlete motivation. The practise of democratic coaching is characterised by the cultivation of open channels of communication, the establishment of trust, and the promotion of cooperation. These elements are crucial in fostering a robust coach-athlete connection. Conversely, an authoritarian coaching approach tends to engender a less favourable coach-athlete relationship primarily owing to its propensity to restrict player input and autonomy.

The use of democratic coaching approaches facilitates athlete engagement, acknowledgment, and perception of advancement, hence augmenting athlete contentment. In contrast, it has been shown that coaching techniques characterised by autocracy may result in diminished levels of athlete satisfaction as a consequence of limited autonomy and impediments to effective communication. Democratic coaching is a coaching approach that enables athletes to have a sense of empowerment, augmenting their intrinsic drive and fostering their engagement. Conversely, Autocratic coaching, which is characterised by a more authoritarian style, has the potential to weaken athlete motivation, resulting in reduced levels of passion and commitment.

In brief, Malaysia Teacher Education Institute coaches that use a democratic leadership style, which is characterised by fostering cooperation, effective communication, and active athlete participation, tend to cultivate favourable coach-athlete connections, augment athlete happiness, and elevate athlete motivation. These coaches create conditions that facilitate the empowerment of athletes, cultivate trust, and fit with players' inherent aspirations for autonomy and acknowledgment. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognise that coaching methods must be flexible in order to accommodate the different preferences of athletes and the unique circumstances of the sport, therefore maximising the desired results for both athletes and coaches. It is also advisable to pursue further investigation with qualitative methodologies.

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