

## Assessing the Influence of Coach Leadership Behaviour on Athlete Performance: A Study of Karisma Athletes

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### Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between coach leadership behavior and sports performance among KARISMA athletes from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Seremban 3 Campus. A total of 288 respondents participated, and data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) was employed to assess coach leadership behaviors, encompassing five dimensions: training and instruction, positive feedback, autocratic behavior, democratic behavior, and social support. Athlete performance was evaluated using the Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS), which includes general performance, team contribution, and personal ability. Results revealed that "training and instruction" had the highest mean among LSS dimensions, while "social support" ranked lowest. For ASPS, team contribution and personal ability scored the highest. The Pearson correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant but low correlation between coach leadership behaviors and sports performance ( $r = 0.281$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The findings highlight that while coach leadership behaviors do influence athletic performance, the strength of this relationship is modest. The prominence of "training and instruction" aligns with established theories in sports psychology that emphasize the role of structured guidance in enhancing athlete development. However, the low emphasis on "social support" suggests a potential gap in holistic athlete management, particularly in fostering psychological resilience and well-being. This supports the necessity for coaches to integrate both task-oriented and relational leadership styles to optimize athlete outcomes. These results contribute to a broader understanding of leadership dynamics in sport, suggesting that future interventions may need to recalibrate the balance between instructional rigor and emotional support to achieve sustained performance improvements.

**Keywords:** Coach Leadership Behavior, Sports Performance, Athlete Development, Social Support in Sports

**Introduction**

The relationship between coach leadership behaviors and athlete performance outcomes has gathered significant attention in sports psychology. Research indicates that various leadership styles employed by coaches can profoundly influence athletes' motivation, satisfaction, and overall performance. For instance, Mokhtar et al. (2021), highlight a positive correlation between coach leadership behaviors and athlete satisfaction, suggesting that effective coaching can enhance performance in competitive settings. This aligns with findings from Chee et al. (2018), which demonstrate that positive feedback from coaches is associated with improved athlete performance, while autocratic leadership styles can detrimentally affect athletes' motivation and performance levels. Furthermore, Sumarsono (2023), emphasizes the role of grit as a mediating factor in the relationship between coach leadership style and athlete satisfaction. This suggests that a coach's ability to foster resilience and determination in athletes can be crucial for enhancing their performance outcomes. Similarly, Hao et al. (2022), argue that the quality of the coach-athlete relationship, influenced by the coach's leadership style, significantly impacts athletes' motivation and satisfaction. This perspective is supported by Hodge and Lonsdale (2011), who assert that the interpersonal dynamics between coaches and athletes are critical for fostering a positive sporting environment conducive to high performance.

The Leadership Efficacy Model posits that effective coach leadership is contingent upon the alignment of coaching behaviors with athletes' preferences and needs (Lisá, 2023). This model represents the importance of understanding athletes' perspectives on coaching styles, as it can lead to enhanced satisfaction and performance outcomes. The findings from Li Li (2021) further reinforce this notion, indicating that both coach leadership and the quality of the coach-athlete relationship play synergistic roles in achieving team effectiveness. The interplay between coach leadership behaviors and athlete performance is varies involving various psychological and relational dynamics. It is evident that fostering a supportive and adaptive coaching environment is essential for optimizing athlete performance. Consequently, the aim of this study is to investigate the influence of coaches leadership behaviour and athlete performance with the research objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the preferred coach leadership behaviors that is mostly effective among KARISMA athletes.
2. To identify the factors contributing to athlete performance during the KARISMA competition.
3. To examine the relationship between coach leadership behaviours athletes' performance outcomes.

**Literature Review***Coach Leadership Styles*

Coaching behaviours can be categorized into distinct styles, each influencing athlete differently. Autocratic leadership, characterized by unilateral decision-making, often leads to negative outcomes such as decreased athlete motivation and satisfaction. For instance, studies indicate that autocratic coaching can result in lower enthusiasm and higher dropout rates among athletes, as it does not align with their preferences for participation and input in decision-making processes (Kim et al., 2021; Jiménez et al., 2019). Conversely, democratic coaching styles, which encourage athlete involvement in decisions, have been shown to

enhance motivation and performance by fostering a sense of ownership and commitment among athletes (Mokhtar et al., 2021; Hao et al., 2022). The provision of social support and positive feedback is crucial in coaching. Literature highlights that coaches who exhibit supportive behaviours contribute significantly to athletes' psychological well-being and performance outcomes (Lemelin et al., 2022; Rozaidi et al., 2023). Positive feedback not only boosts athletes' self-efficacy but also reinforces their motivation, particularly during critical training and competition periods (Lau et al., 2020). Thus, the effectiveness of a coach's leadership style is contingent upon their ability to adapt to the needs and preferences of their athletes, promoting a conducive training environment.

#### *Factors Contributing to Athlete Performance:*

Athlete performance is considered complex and influenced by a combination of physical, psychological, and social factors. The coach-athlete relationship plays a critical role in this dynamic. A strong, positive relationship between coaches and athletes can enhance motivation, satisfaction, and ultimately performance (Raabe & Zakrajsek, 2017; Zhao & Jowett, 2022). Coaches who understand their athletes' individual needs and foster open communication are more likely to create an environment conducive to high performance (Davis et al., 2019; Chia et al., 2015). Additionally, the psychological constructs of grit and mental toughness have been identified as significant predictors of athlete performance. Grit, defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, has been linked to higher levels of athlete satisfaction and performance (Sumarsono, 2023). Coaches who cultivate these traits through their leadership behaviours can significantly impact their athletes' success.

#### *The Interplay Between Leadership Behaviours and Performance Outcomes:*

The interplay between coach leadership behaviours and athlete performance outcomes is different from in a specific competition. Literature indicates that the alignment between athletes' preferred leadership styles and their coaches' actual behaviours is crucial for satisfaction and performance (Chia et al., 2015; Razali et al., 2018). When coaches exhibit behaviours that resonate with athletes' preferences, it leads to improved performance outcomes and greater athlete satisfaction (Kim & Cruz, 2016). In addition, leadership in coaching has been shown to enhance athletes' accountability and performance. Coaches who are perceived as ethical leaders foster an environment of trust and respect, which is essential for optimal performance (White & Rezania, 2019). This ethical dimension of coaching underscores the importance of integrity and moral responsibility in leadership roles within sports. Not forgetting, this is crucial from preventing athletes to face issue with their mental health (Sazali et.al.2023).

## **Methods**

The methodology of this study aimed to examine the relationship between coach leadership behaviors and athletes' performance outcomes, focusing on factors contributing to performance as perceived by athletes. The study utilized a quantitative approach, engaging KARISMA athletes from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) who participated in inter-branch competitions. Through a simple random sampling technique, 288 athletes were selected as respondents to ensure a representative and unbiased sample. The study focused on the perceived coach leadership behaviors, including training and instruction, democratic and autocratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback, and how these behaviors influence the athletes' subjective performance outcomes.

### *Research Design and Instruments*

The research employed both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to examine the data. The descriptive analysis explored the frequency and central tendencies of coach leadership behaviors as perceived by athletes, while inferential analysis sought to understand the relationship between these behaviors and athletes' performance outcomes. More specifically, the study utilized Pearson's correlation to investigate the strength of the relationship between coach leadership styles and performance metrics. The data collection tool for this study was a structured questionnaire consisting of three main sections: socio-demographic data (Section A), coach leadership behaviors (Section B), and athletes' subjective performance (Section C). Each section of the questionnaire was developed to target different research objectives while ensuring clarity and relevance to the study's context.

#### *Section A: Socio-Demographic Data:*

Section A focused on capturing basic demographic information, including the athlete's age, gender, sports involvement, and years of participation. These variables were critical for examining potential demographic differences in perceived leadership behaviors and performance outcomes. The inclusion of demographic data allowed for a more nuanced understanding of how factors such as gender might influence preferences for certain leadership styles, a crucial consideration in sports management research (Chelladurai, 2012).

#### *Section B: Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS):*

Section B utilized the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS), which has been widely recognized for measuring athlete perceptions of coach leadership behaviors across five dimensions: training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback. The LSS consists of 40 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where respondents indicated the degree to which they perceived their coach engaging in these behaviors. Training and instruction (13 items) and democratic behavior (9 items) were designed to measure the extent to which coaches provided technical guidance and encouraged athlete input, respectively. Autocratic behavior (5 items) assessed how much control coaches exerted over decision-making, while social support (8 items) and positive feedback (5 items) examined the emotional and motivational dimensions of leadership. The LSS has been validated across multiple contexts and is known for its robustness in assessing the relational aspects of coach-athlete interactions. The decision to utilize the LSS in this study was based on its proven effectiveness in exploring how different leadership styles correlate with athlete satisfaction and performance (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980).

#### *Section C: Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS):*

Section C measured athletes' subjective performance outcomes using the Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS), adapted from Nahum et al. (2016). The ASPS consists of six items, divided into three dimensions: team contribution, personal ability, and general performance. These dimensions were rated by the athletes on a 5-point Likert scale to assess their perceptions of their own performance. The use of subjective performance ratings allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how athletes themselves perceive their contributions, as subjective assessments often provide insights into factors like confidence and self-efficacy, which may not be captured by objective metrics (Jones et al., 2011).

*Reliability and Validity*

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted with 30 non-KARISMA athletes. This pre-test helped in refining the questionnaire items and ensured that they were clear and relevant to the participants. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to measure the internal consistency of the scales, with values greater than 0.90 indicating excellent reliability across both the LSS and ASPS. As Konting et al. (2009) noted, ensuring high reliability is critical in social science research to guarantee that the instruments measure what they intend to.

*Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the central tendencies of coach leadership behaviors and athlete performance ratings. Inferential statistics, particularly Pearson's correlation, were employed to assess the relationship between leadership behaviors and performance outcomes. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$ , with an  $r$ -value greater than 0.3 indicating a moderate correlation between variables. This analytical approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of how different leadership behaviors such as training and instruction or social support uniquely contributed to performance outcomes.

Table 1

*The Interpretation of Cronbach Alpha Value*

Cronbach Alpha Value	Interpretation
0.91-1.00	0.91-1.00
0.81-0.90	0.81-0.90
0.71-0.80	0.71-0.80
0.61-0.70	0.61-0.70
0.01-0.60	0.01-0.60

Table 2

*Cronbach Alpha Values for questionnaire used in the study*

Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS)	0.913	40
Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS)	0.925	6

**Result and Discussion**

The results presented in Table 3 indicate a clear preference among athletes for specific coach leadership behaviors, with "training and instruction" receiving the highest mean score ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=0.58$ ) and "social support" being the least preferred ( $M=3.80$ ,  $SD=0.72$ ). This finding suggests that athletes prioritize technical guidance and skill development over emotional or social support from their coaches. The preference for training and instruction aligns with the notion that athletes often seek to enhance their performance through structured learning and skill acquisition, which is critical in competitive sports environments (Carroll & Allen, 2020; Occhino et al., 2014).

Table 3

*Result of the preferred coach leadership behaviours*

Domain	M	SD	Rank
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Coaches' leadership	Training and instruction	4.38	0.58	1
	Positive feedback	4.16	0.66	2
	Autocratic behaviour	3.96	0.62	3
	Democratic behaviour	3.82	0.76	4
	Social support	3.80	0.72	5

The high ranking of training and instruction may reflect athletes' intrinsic motivation to improve their competencies, as supported by self-determination theory (SDT). According to SDT, autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors, which include providing training and instruction, are essential for fostering athletes' intrinsic motivation and competence (Carroll & Allen, 2020; Occhino et al., 2014). This is particularly relevant in high-stakes environments where performance outcomes are closely monitored, and athletes may feel pressure to excel. The emphasis on technical guidance can also be interpreted as a response to the competitive nature of sports, where athletes often perceive their success as contingent upon their skill level and preparedness (Cousens et al., 2015). Conversely, the lower preference for social support raises important questions about the role of emotional and psychological support in athletic performance. While social support has been shown to correlate positively with athletes' well-being and performance satisfaction, its perceived importance may vary depending on the context and individual athlete needs (Newman & Weiss, 2017; Hagan et al., 2017). For instance, athletes may prioritize immediate performance-related guidance over emotional support, particularly in competitive settings where the focus is on achieving specific outcomes (Newman & Weiss, 2017). However, this does not diminish the importance of social support, as it has been linked to better coping mechanisms during stress and injury recovery (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010; Yang et al., 2010).

The findings suggest that coaches should be aware of the varying preferences among athletes regarding leadership behaviors. While technical instruction is paramount, integrating social support strategies could enhance the overall coach-athlete relationship and promote a more holistic approach to athlete development (Katagami & Tsuchiya, 2016). Coaches who can balance these dimensions may foster a more resilient and motivated athlete, ultimately contributing to better performance outcomes (Ha et al., 2021). The results from Table 3 highlight the complex interplay between different coaching behaviors and athlete preferences. While training and instruction are crucial for skill development, the role of social support should not be overlooked, as it can significantly impact athletes' psychological well-being and performance in the long term. Future research should explore how these preferences evolve over time and in different competitive contexts to better inform coaching practices.

Table 4

*The source that contributes toward athlete performance*

Domain	M	SD	Rank
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Athlete's	Team Contribution	4.03	0.74	1
Performance	Personal Ability	4.01	0.75	2
	General	3.93	0.80	3
	Performance			

The results presented in Table 4 highlight the significant contributions of various factors to athlete performance, with "Team Contribution" ranking highest (M = 4.03, SD = 0.74), followed closely by "Personal Ability" (M = 4.01, SD = 0.75) and "General Performance" (M = 3.93, SD = 0.80). This ranking suggests the multifaceted nature of athletic performance, suggesting that both interpersonal dynamics and individual capabilities play crucial roles in achieving optimal outcomes in sports. The high ranking of "Team Contribution" emphasizes the importance of social dynamics and collaborative efforts within a team setting. Research indicates that effective communication and a strong coach-athlete relationship are pivotal in enhancing team performance. For instance, Yang et al (2022), argue that establishing a robust communication system between coaches and medical teams can significantly improve athletes' psychological and physiological conditions, thereby enhancing overall performance (Yang et al., 2022). Furthermore, the coach-athlete relationship has been shown to directly influence athletes' motivation and performance outcomes, as highlighted by Nicholls et al. (2017) and (Burns et al., 2022; Nicholls et al., 2017; Burns et al., 2022). These studies collectively suggest that a supportive team environment fosters better performance through enhanced motivation and reduced stress levels. In contrast, the second-ranked factor, "Personal Ability," reflects the intrinsic qualities and skills of the athletes themselves. This aligns with findings from (Scharfen & Memmert, 2019), who emphasize that cognitive functions and skill levels are critical determinants of performance in elite athletes (Scharfen & Memmert, 2019). The role of personal attributes, such as self-efficacy and resilience, cannot be overstated. Ilham & Dimyati (2021) demonstrate that athletes with high self-efficacy tend to perform better, as they are more likely to engage in goal-directed behaviors and maintain focus under pressure (Ilham & Dimyati, 2021). This suggests that while team dynamics are essential, individual capabilities and mental fortitude are equally vital for success in competitive sports.

Lastly, the third factor, "General Performance," encompasses a broader range of performance metrics, including physical conditioning and psychological well-being. The findings of Colyer et al (2017), support the notion that physical predictors, such as strength and agility, are fundamental to athletic performance (Colyer et al., 2017). Additionally, the impact of psychological factors, such as stress management and coping strategies, is critical. Research by González-García et al (2019), indicates that perceived coach leadership styles can significantly affect athletes' emotional states and coping mechanisms, which in turn influence performance outcomes (González-García et al., 2019). This interplay between physical and psychological factors highlights the complexity of athlete performance, suggesting that a holistic approach is necessary for optimizing outcomes. The result indicate that both team dynamics and personal attributes are integral to athlete performance. The interplay between these factors suggests that effective coaching, strong interpersonal relationships, and individual capabilities must be harmonized to achieve peak performance in sports. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics, particularly how they can be leveraged to enhance training and competitive strategies.

Table 5

*Relationship between between coach leadership behaviours and sport's performance*

		Sports Performance
Coach Leadership Behaviours	Pearson Correlation	0.281
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000
	N	288

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results presented in Table 5 indicate a statistically significant positive correlation between coach leadership behaviors and sports performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.281 and a significance level of 0.05. This finding underscores the critical role that effective coaching plays in enhancing athletic performance. The relationship is particularly noteworthy given the substantial body of literature that supports the assertion that leadership styles in coaching significantly influence athletes' performance outcomes.

Literature has consistently demonstrated that the leadership behaviors exhibited by coaches can directly affect athletes' motivation, confidence, and overall performance. For instance, Chee et al (2018), highlight that coaches who align their strategies with the needs of their athletes foster an environment conducive to improved performance, suggesting that the alignment of coaching behavior with athlete expectations is crucial for success (Chee et al., 2018). Similarly, Gómez-López et al (2019), emphasize the importance of the motivational climate created by coaches, which can either mitigate or exacerbate athletes' fears of failure, thereby impacting their performance levels (Gómez-López et al., 2019). This aligns with the findings of (Mokhtar et al., 2021), who found a positive relationship between specific coach leadership styles and athlete satisfaction, further supporting the notion that effective coaching is integral to performance enhancement (Mokhtar et al., 2021). In other words, support that enhances athletes' motivation in sports performance stems from various sources and factors, including intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation influences (Aina et al., 2023).

Moreover, the concept of emotional contagion, as discussed by (Zhao & Jowett, 2022), posits that coaching leadership can shape the psychological states of athletes, which in turn influences their performance (Zhao & Jowett, 2022). This psychological aspect is critical, as it suggests that the emotional and cognitive environments fostered by coaches can significantly impact athletes' ability to perform under pressure. The findings from Yuan & Wang (2017) further reinforce this perspective, indicating that the quality of the coach-athlete relationship is a vital factor in determining the effectiveness of coach leadership, which ultimately translates into performance outcomes (Yuan & Wang, 2017). Considering these findings, it is evident that the correlation between coach leadership behaviors and sports performance is not merely a statistical artifact but rather a reflection of the complex interplay between leadership, motivation, and performance in sports. Coaches who adopt a transformational leadership style, characterized by individualized attention and support, are likely to cultivate a more positive and productive environment for their athletes, leading to enhanced performance (Gosai et al., 2021). Therefore, the implications of this study extend beyond mere correlation; they suggest a foundational principle for coaching practices aimed at optimizing athlete performance.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the results presented in the tables highlight the significant impact of coach leadership behaviors on athlete performance, emphasizing the importance of specific leadership styles in fostering a conducive environment for athletic success. The data indicates



that training and instruction are the most preferred leadership behaviors among coaches, followed closely by positive feedback, which aligns with existing literature that underscores the necessity of supportive coaching practices for enhancing athlete motivation and performance outcomes (White & Rezania, 2019; Chee et al., 2018). The correlation between coach leadership behaviors and sports performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.281, suggests a moderate positive relationship, indicating that effective coaching can indeed facilitate better performance among athletes (White & Rezania, 2019; Subijana et al., 2022). In addition, the findings regarding the sources contributing to athlete performance reveal that team contribution and personal ability are paramount, suggesting that both individual and collective dynamics play critical roles in achieving athletic excellence (Mokhtar et al., 2021; Gomes et al., 2019). This dual focus on team and individual factors resonates with the concept of transformational leadership in sports, where coaches not only guide individual athletes but also cultivate a strong team culture that promotes collaboration and shared goals (Gosai et al., 2021; Malloy et al., 2022). The implications of these findings are profound, as they suggest that coaches who prioritize training, provide constructive feedback, and foster a supportive team environment are likely to enhance both individual and team performance. This aligns with the notion that effective leadership in sports is not merely about directing but also about inspiring and empowering athletes to reach their full potential (Bandura & Kavussanu, 2018; Arthur et al., 2011). Therefore, it is essential for coaching education programs to emphasize the development of these leadership skills to prepare coaches for the multifaceted challenges they face in fostering athlete performance.

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