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The leadership style among football coaches leadership style among teachers in Hulu Langat district: The implications on National Football Development Program (NFDP) in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the leadership style of football coach among teachers in the Selangor Hulu Langat District. The research design is through the interview method. A total of 12 teachers that act as school football coaches were involved in this study. Data analysis was conducted using thematic methodology to find the important themes. The results show that football coaches in Hulu Langat Selangor district schools use leadership styles based on the situation. To conclude, the coaches did not possess any consistent or permanent leadership style, but are influenced by the maturity factor of the athlete. The results of this study are important as can be used as guidelines in developing football players in school in Malaysia.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Football, Coaches, Teachers, School

Introduction

Sports coaching are not something strange to be discussed (Jones, Edwards, & Filho, 2016; Karim & Nadzalan, 2017a; Karim & Nadzalan, 2017b; Kjaer, 2017; Nelson, Cushion, Potrac, & Groom, 2014). Traditionally, coaching is defined as a situation where there are process of teaching by a trainer that later bring development among the athlete take place (Cushion et al., 2010). Coaching develops individuals by improving their performance (Crisfield, Cabral, & Carpenter, 1996). Coaching can be regarded as a unique occupation where it involves a combination of different roles (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2015; Crisfield et al., 1996; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2002). It involves the rules to improve athlete's performance and skills and is tested through the results of the competition (Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000). Coaching is an activity involving coaches to make decisions based on various dynamic factors (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003) while Nash & Collins (2006) stated that coaching is a vague process, complex and dynamics

that require athletes to adapt to the given environmental conditions. Leadership style is a priority in building a team organization in achieving goals. Although leadership is something complex to define but it leads to equality in terms of context as a process, influence, teamwork and goal determination. This means that leadership is a process by which an individual influences others to achieve common goals (Chelladurai, 2007).

According to Chapman (2015), the style of coaching refers to the overall direction of each training session. The style of coaching is divided into three, namely autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. Autocratic is where the coach makes all the decisions and the athlete just do what they are told. Democratic style involves discussion and sharing in decision-making. Coaches using this style will guide athletes to choose and achieve their goals. Laissez-Faire is where the coaches only make some decisions and the rest depends on the athlete. Among the features in effective leaders includes; i) to provide direction through the quality of effective training, ii) effectiveness in communicating, iii) to motivate athletes, iv) to improve athlete's skills, v) Has sufficient knowledge of the sport. Effective leadership occur when a coach can build a good relationship with athletes (DuBrin, 2015; Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016; Northouse, 2017). Horn (2008) states that effective guidance behaviour leads the athlete to achieving personal achievement, performance goals and delivering positive psychological results.

The objective of this study are to; i) identify coach-style leadership style among football teams, ii) identify the relationship between the effectiveness of leadership style practice on athlete's current performance and iii) identify the roles or effects of coach-style leadership in relation to athletes. Studies related to the leadership style of this football coaching can provide many benefits, especially for future coaches in the field of sports coaching. Existing coaches and coaches need to be exposed to coaching related knowledge where coach leadership style will affect current athlete's performance.

Methodology

Participants

This study aims to look at the types of leadership that were applied by the coaches at the Hulu Langat District. 12 secondary school football coaches were interviewed.

Instrumentation

According to Creswell (1994), in the qualitative study, researchers acting as research instrument. In qualitative study, researchers are the main instruments that act to collect data by observation, interviews and data analysis in the field, then analyse the data. Interviews are conducted face-to-face and are recorded using the voice and video recorder. The recording takes around 50 minutes to 1 hour. The researchers also use interview guides to ensure that interviews run smoothly and prevent researchers from being distorted away from the objective of the study. The findings were analyzed using thematic method. The thematic method is one of the methods in qualitative research which is a method based on important themes. The data were analyzed according to the themes developed based on the study questions and the interview answers.

Results and Discussions

The data obtained from the interview was analysed in accordance with the procedures outlined by (Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993). The second phase of analysis includes creating categories and finding themes. The text is divided into segments and then marked with a brief description of the topic. Categories are then created by listings and compare them to descriptions that have the same meaning, grouped and labelled. The categories should always be flexible as they are derived from the data analysis and adjustments that are necessary when the process goes on.

Practice of Leadership Style among Football Coach

Overall, coaching leadership style is more autocratic, where the full decision is made by the coach. A coach must be able to lead, teach, respond, and give directions when necessary in some circumstances. If the athlete does not receive instructions, then it will cause confusion and may cause conflict. The crisis is a widespread threat to the performance of an organization (Hutchins & Wang, 2008). The results of this study are supported by previous research findings, where autocratic leadership is widely used in the organization of China especially during crisis situations (Alas, Gao, & Vanhala, 2010). Muczyk & Holt (2008) consider autocratic as the most important leadership style during a crisis because the followers under the organization will depend entirely on decision makers in the situation.

Furthermore, based on observation, age factor also influenced coaching practices and it was supported by previous studies where the athlete's maturity level (Nazarudin, Fauzee, Jamalis, Geok, & Din, 2009) may have a big impact as the perception or requirement of athletes at secondary school need more attention. This situation is also closely related to their maturity in the sport that they have come from experience (Nazarudin et al., 2009; Pilus & Saadan, 2009).

The Relationship between the Effectiveness of Leadership Style Practices against Current Athlete Performance

McGrath & MacMillan (2000) reported that there is a significant relationship between leadership style and organizational performance. Based on the athlete's observation in relation to athlete's current achievement, athletes are giving their best to increase their performances. It can be seen that one of the interviewed school coaches is often the champion of the soccer championship held at the district level and managed to sustain the performance over the years and there are among those who represent the higher level. This shows there is effectiveness on the leadership style used by the coach on the athlete.

According to Gouldner (1960), the attitude and behaviour of the subordinates are linked to leadership behaviour. When subordinates receive orders from their leaders, they tend to respond with positive attitude and performance. On the contrary, when subordinates are subjected to threats from authoritarian leaders (Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz, & Tang, 2010), they tend to respond with a negative reaction. This is contrary to the results of the study where athletes often show interest in training and are more motivated to practice and during games. This can be attributed to the age-appropriate use of the leadership style used by coaches in training athletes under the age of 15 which is in line with the Hersey and Blanchard Leadership

Style Model (1977) (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979), who believe that in younger athletes that are lack of experience and knowledge in skills are more fond to coaches who can give direct order and be in full control of each of their actions. Hence, the autocratic leadership style is preferred by younger athletes.

This good relationship is due to the role that the coach takes in training. Based on the findings of the researcher, it is found that the coach is not just train but plays another role for the athlete, as a listener, so it may be one of the factors that attract athletes to continue training and delivering the best. This is consistent with (Amorose & Horn, 2001) findings that the types of leadership behavior shown by the coach will have a positive impact on both athletes and teams. This is due to the various roles played by the coach, such as teachers, planners, counsellors and motivators (Surujlal, Singh, & Hollander, 2004) in giving direction, guiding skills development and providing performance feedback in their quest to achieve the goals of this sports organization.

Role or Effect of Coach Leadership Style in Relationships with Athletes

Kelloway, Loughlin, Barling, & Nault (2002) states that a person under the organization will be more motivated to give a good commitment to the organization if they receive instructions from a prudent and charismatic leader. Translating into sports, athletes will provide good co-operation to follow the training and in accordance with the instructions given by the coach. This is due to the personal or features that the coach has in their interest.

Based on the findings, the coach can influence the athlete's psychology, such as negotiating with athletes preferably during outside the field, until the coach becomes a dependable person among the athletes. It is also used in solving the conflict amongst other athletes. This finding is consistent with the results of Harwood & Swain, (2001) and Krane, Snow, & Greenleaf, (1997), which states the involvement of coaches in mental training to a certain extent is essential for the effectiveness of the consultation as they can affect the athlete's attainment environment (Blom, Visek, & Harris, 2013).

Children and teenagers listen to and imitate many of the things the trainer does. Teen observations of coaches, parents, and supporters will influence adolescent moral development and the importance of social societies to be a positive model for them (Martin, Ewing, & Gould, 2014). That is why it is always important for the coaches to have a good character, leave a good impression, and be an example to the athlete. This can be proven by the study conducted by the athlete to receive the instructional style provided by the coach. It may be because they are comfortable with the methods possessed by their coaches.

Based on interviews, there are problems and conflicts exist between the coaches and athletes in terms of the instruction delivery process. Although a respondent has difficulties due to language differences, it is not a big problem as there are two way communications between them after the completion of the training session. The coaches allowed the athlete to ask if there is anything that is not clear.

Recommendations from Respondents

One of the respondents stated that this study should be done by involving two parties involved in sports leadership that are the coach and athlete so that the findings will become more extensive. In addition, researchers are able to study the needs of athletes in choosing their coach.

Summary

The findings of this study revealed that the football coaches at school in Hulu Langat District are more prone towards using the autocratic leadership style. The coaches demonstrated a straightforward attitude towards the situation. This includes determining the decisions made, defining what needs to be done and how to do it, have a little feedback from athletes, and less trust in athlete's decisions. The findings of this study should be used as references for the results obtained by the team. The results or any other methods of assessment for the program can be related to the leadership style adopted by the coaches that in the future will reflect whether the objectives of the NFDP achieved or not.

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