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The role of perceived leadership behaviors as predictor of assertiveness levels in individual sport athletes

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the role of athletes' perception of coaches' leadership behavior as predictor of athletes' assertiveness in individual sport. 239 individual sport athletes ($X_{age}=20.79\pm3.32$) voluntarily participated to the research. The participants consisted of 170 male (71,1%) and 69 female (28,9%) athletes from various individual sports such as wrestling, athletics, weightlifting, taekwondo, boxing, karate, badminton etc. The data were collected using a personal information form, Leadership Scale for Sport and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used in SPSS 17. $p<.05$ was determined as the statistical significance value. Results showed that there were positive significant correlations between the subscales of Leadership Scale for Sports (Training and instruction behavior, democratic behavior, social support behavior and positive feedback behavior) and assertiveness. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to assess the ability of leadership behaviors to predict assertiveness scores of the athletes after controlling for the influence of age and gender. The model explained an additional 21% variance in assertiveness after controlling for age and gender, R^2 change = .21, F change (5, 231) = 12.833, $p<.05$. It appeared in the final model that training and instruction behavior ($\beta=.45$, $p<.05$) and autocratic behavior ($\beta=-.17$, $p<.05$) were statistically significant. The results indicated that training and instruction behavior of sport coaches could positively contribute to assertiveness score whereas autocratic behavior seems to undermine it in individual sport athletes.

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1. Introduction

People who practice sports face physical and psychological overload. It is seen that while technical and tactical skills are trained in the training sessions, psychological features which are necessary for sportive success are often neglected (Ikizler&Karagözoglu). It is observed that many athletes who perform well in competitions do not carry out similar performances in stressful situations. It is thought that the most important factor for this difference is anxiety level of athletes (Konter, 1996). Therefore, psychological states of athletes appear to be very important in sport context.

It could be said that people have three different types of behaviours in their communication. These are; shyness, aggression and assertiveness (Baltaş, 1996). Alberti and Emmons (1973) defines an assertive individual as being concerned about other people and as knowing their own rights (Alberti& Emmons, 1970). Assertiveness is defined as “being able to express own positive or negative emotions, thoughts or desires without not neglecting other individuals’ rights and not experiencing anxiety or guilt (Uğur, 1996). Families who know the importance of assertiveness in communication encourage their children to join sport schools and to interact with reliable sport coaches. Because, it has been shown that participating sportive activities develops mental and individual structure, strengthens willpower, simplifies teamwork, ensures cooperation, improves self-confidence and self-control, and contributes to learning (Suveren, 1997; Kapıkıran, 1993; Büyükyazı, Saraçoğlu, Karadeniz and Çamlıyer2003).

It is known that sports coaches’ leadership features are very important (Heppner, 1987). Every athlete needs assistance from a sport coach regardless of his/her talent or effort exerted. A sport coach is not only responsible for training the athletes or teaching the sport techniques. It could be said that sport coaches’ most important responsibility is increasing athletes’ performance by coaches’ own leadership features (Başer,1998). Sport coaches often evaluate athletes’ motor behaviours in the competitions to support the athletes and to reach their performance goals. As a result of sport coaches’ feedbacks and behaviours, athletes decide to behave in a certain way. Sport coaches’ feedbacks either increase athletes’ assertiveness or diminish it which could lead to loss of the competition (Deniz, 2002). In the light of these explanations, the aim of this research was to investigate the role of athletes’ perception of their coaches’ leadership behaviour as predictor of athletes’ assertiveness in individual sports.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

239 individual sport athletes ($X_{age}=20.79\pm3.32$) voluntarily participated to the research. The participants consisted of 170 male (71,1%) and 69 female (28.9%) athletes from various individual sports such as wrestling, athletics, weightlifting, taekwondo, boxing, karate, badminton etc.

2.2. Data collecting tools

The data was collected using a personal information form, Leadership Scale for Sport and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule.

Perceived version of Chelladurai and Saleh’s (1980) Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) was used to assess the coaches’ leadership behaviours. This scale has 40 items and measures five dimensions of leadership behaviour that are; training and instruction behaviour (13 items), democratic behaviour (9 items), autocratic behaviour (5 items), social support behaviour (8 items), and positive feedback behaviour (5 items). Answers are scored from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The mean of each dimension represents the relevant behaviour of coach. Language adaptation of the scale into Turkish was made by Toros and Tiryaki (2006).

Rathus Assertiveness Schedule was developed by Rathus (1973) and translated into Turkish by Voltan-Acar (1980). The scale has 30 items and measures assertiveness levels of individuals.

2.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used in

SPSS 17. $p < .05$ was determined as the statistical significance value.

3. Results

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha values for the variables are presented on table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha values

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Age	239	16	30	20.79	3.317	
Assertiveness	239	78	155	120.34	17.75	0.78
Training and Instruction	239	1.62	5	3.95	0.71	0.86
Democratic Behaviour	239	1.56	5	3.86	0.71	0.47
Autocratic Behaviour	239	1.00	5	3.25	0.73	0.79
Social Support Behaviour	239	1.63	5	3.93	0.68	0.72
Positive Feedback Behaviour	239	1.20	5	3.91	0.80	0.71

Minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha values can be seen on table 1. Cronbach's alpha values are ranged from 0,47 to 0,86. Most of the subscales are above the acceptable value for their Cronbach's alphas.

Table 2. Correlation between assertiveness, perceived leadership behaviours and some demographic characteristics.

	Age	Sport experience	Education level	Training and Instruction	Democratic Behaviour	Autocratic Behaviour	Social Support Behaviour	Positive Feedback Behaviour
Assertiveness	r .094	-.037	.115	.426*	.302*	-.107	.343*	.315*
	p .148	.571	.077	.000	.000	.099	.000	.000

* $p < .05$

Results showed that assertiveness significantly correlated with training and instruction behaviour, democratic behaviour, social support behaviour and positive feedback behaviour.

Table 3. Result of hierarchical multiple regression analysis

	R	R ²	R ² Change	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Step 1								
Age				.424	.353	.079	1.202	.231
Gender	0,12	0,014	0,014	-2.955	2.575	-.076	-1.148	.252
Step 2								
Age				.288	.321	.054	.898	.370
Gender				-2.900	2.323	-.074	-1.248	.213
Training and Instruction				11.230	3.054	.450	3.677	.000*
Democratic Behaviour	0,478	0,229	0,214	-3.889	2.777	-.156	-1.400	.163
Autocratic Behaviour				-4.240	1.463	-.175	-2.898	.004*
Social Support Behaviour				2.021	3.036	.078	.666	.506
Positive Feedback Behaviour				1.903	1.855	.085	1.026	.306

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to investigate the ability of perceived leadership behaviours to predict assertiveness, after controlling for age and gender. In the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, two predictors were entered, age and gender. This model was not statistically significant $F(2,236) = 1,712$; $p > 0,05$. After entry of the five dimensions of perceived coaching behaviour at step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 22,9% $F(7,231) = 9,778$; $p < 0,05$. The model explained an additional 21% variance in assertiveness after controlling for age and gender. R square change = 0,21, F change $(5,231) = 12,833$, $p < 0,05$. It appeared in the final model that training and instruction behaviour ($\beta = 0,45$; $p < 0,05$) and autocratic behaviour ($\beta = -0,17$; $p < 0,05$) were statistically significant.

4. Discussion

Relevant researches in social, educational or sport psychology literature have been conducted in order to identify factors that motivate athletes (Amorose and Horn, 2000). Therefore, it seems that it is important to describe how athletes behave in a certain way. Understanding of what could change athletes' behaviours or what could have an effect on their perceptions or behaviours is crucial. Identifying all the factors, which could affect athletes, could lead to finding out effective ways for performance enhancement. Therefore, it seems to be important to identify which coaching behaviours could contribute to athletes' assertiveness. It is assumed that coaches play a very active role in training and competition. Sport coaches spend most of their time in interacting with the athletes, try to motivate team members and provide feedback (Reinboth, Duda, Ntoumanis, 2004). In this research it was found that assertiveness of the athletes significantly and positively correlated with training and instruction behaviour, democratic behaviour, social support behaviour and positive feedback behaviour. This result shows that assertiveness levels of athletes increase while these coaching behaviours are experienced. Furthermore, in line with the aim of the research we tried to discover which coaching behaviours contribute to athlete's assertiveness. We found out that training and instruction behaviour makes the strongest contribution and second contribution was made by autocratic behaviour. Beta values in the regression model showed that training and instruction behaviour positively affects athletes' assertiveness whereas autocratic behaviour negatively affects it. These results were in line with the previous research. Relevant literature showed that autonomy supportive coaching is more beneficial (Banack et al., 2011; Felton and Jowett, 2013; Gillet et al., 2010; Amorose and Anderson-Butcher, 2007).

As a result it could be said that autocratic coaching behaviour negatively contributes to the regression model. It shows that autocratic behaviour of sport coaches could negatively affect athletes' assertiveness. When the athletes do not join the decision making process their assertiveness may be deteriorated. Moreover, training and instruction behaviour of coaches appeared to be important to increase athletes' assertiveness. Considering our results from this research, it could be said that sport coaches should be less autocratic and they could try to increase training and instruction behaviours instead.

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