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Universidade Iguaçu
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COACH'S LEADERSHIP STYLES AND TEAM COHESION IN IRAN FOOTBALL CLUBS PROFESSIONAL LEAGUE

Rahim Ramzaninezhad & Misagh Hoseini Keshtan
Guilan University

Corresponding author:
Rahim Ramzaninezhad
rramzani@guilan.ac.ir
h.misagh@gmail.com
Fax:00981316690675
Tel:00981316690257

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ABSTRACT
RAMZANINEZHD, R.; KESHTAN M. H. The relationship between coach's leadership styles and team cohesion in Iran football clubs professional league. Brazilian Journal Biomotricity, v. 3, n. 2, p. 111-120, 2009. The present study examined relationship between coach's leadership styles and team cohesion in Iran football clubs professional league (2006-2007). Athletes (n=264) from 12 football teams completed the perceived version of the leadership scale for sport (LSS) and the group environment questionnaire (GEQ). Both questionnaires were administered at the end of season. Result indicated that increases in athletes' perceptions of team cohesion was positively correlated with perceptions of their coach exhibiting higher levels of training and instruction, social support, positive feedback, democratic behavior and lower levels of autocratic behaviors. A Comparison of coach's leadership styles demonstrated that football coaches exhibited higher in training and instruction and lower in democratic behavior. ANOVA with repeated measures and Tukey post hoc test revealed that successful football teams tend to be more cohesive and their coaches exhibited higher levels of democratic and social support behavior. Overall, the findings support the significant relationship between team cohesion and leadership behavior, and highlight the interdependence in team sports, which can significantly affect the need for team cohesion that contributes to team success.

Key Words: Cohesion; football; leadership

INTRODUCTION
There can be individual successes even in losing experiences, but in team sports the team is judged by wins and losses and the coach's job is only guaranteed if the team is successful by the same measure. Coaches have great influence on their team, and the coach's leadership styles and behaviors have a great effect on the performance of their athletes. From a theoretical and a practical standpoint, it is important to examine many
issues that relate coach’s behavior to the many correlates that influence team success. One such correlate is team cohesion. There is some empirical evidence that team cohesion is related to coaching behavior (e.g. SHIELDS, et al., 1997; WESTRE & WEISS, 1991). The relationship between leader behaviors and cohesion in natural groups has received scant empirical attention. In a military context, the cohesiveness of combat groups has been investigated in relationship to the behavior of unit leaders (BARTONE & KIRKLAND, 1991). In the therapeutic context, evidence suggests that leaders who are less directive and exhibit more personal warmth have groups with higher cohesiveness (ANTONUCCIO et al., 1987). In an organizational context, group cohesiveness has been shown to increase when leaders reward productivity (PODSAKOFF & TODOR, 1985). In this present study, we investigated the relationship of coach’s leadership styles, cohesion and team success within the context of team sport.

Coaching Effectiveness

The research that has been conducted over the past two decades in the area of coaching effectiveness has primarily been focused on identifying the coaching characteristics, leadership styles, and behavioral patterns which are most effective. In general, these research studies have defined an “effective coach” as one who elicits either successful performance outcomes or positive psychological responses on the part of her or his athletes (HORN, 2002). Since coaches affect not only their athletes’ physical performance but also their psychosocial well-being, it is important for an effective coach to become attuned to the many personal and individual needs of their athletes. Thus, in addition to the technical skills of their sport, effective coaches may be required to occupy many roles within the lives of their athletes. These may include being a leader, follower, teacher, role model, limit setter, psychologist/ counselor and/or mentor (ANSHEL, 2003). Effective coaches are those who are prepared to meet the individual needs of their athletes and realize that they can make a difference in the team performance by improving their own coaching skills and understanding the effect that their behavior can have on their athletes (ANSHEL, 2003). The two most prominent models of leadership effectiveness in sport, the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (CHELLADURAI, 1978) and the Meditational Model of Leadership (SMOLL & SMITH, 1989) have served as frameworks for much of the related research. Recently, elements of both models have been combined to form a working model of coaching effectiveness (HORN, 2002). Horn’s (2002) working model is founded on three assumptions. First, antecedent factors (i.e. socio-cultural context, organizational climate, and personal characteristics of the coach) and athletes’ personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender, etc.) exert influence on coaches’ behavior indirectly through coaches’ expectancies, beliefs, and goals. Second, coaches’ behavior affects athletes’ evaluation of their coaches’ behavior and team performance. Third, the effectiveness of various coaching interventions is influenced by situational factors and individual differences. Much work remains in clarifying the specific relationships that exist within these broad assumptions.

To quantify the MML, Chelladurai & Saleh (1980) developed the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS). The LSS is a sport-specific measure, which consists of five dimensions of leader behavior; training and instruction, positive feedback, social support, democratic and autocratic behavior. Training and instruction is related instructional behaviors towards task accomplishment. Democratic and autocratic behaviors refer to social process of decision-making. Positive feedback and social support refer to the motivational tendencies of the coach and concern for the personal needs of the athletes (CHELLADURAI, 1985). The LSS has three different versions: the athletes' perception of their coaches' behavior; the athletes' preference for coaching behavior and the coaches' perception of their own behavior.
Group Cohesion

It is reasonable to conclude that the amount of cohesion have a dramatic effect on the team success. Various researchers have addressed the connection between these two concepts by utilizing a variety of sport types including golf, rugby, lacrosse, baseball, basketball and football. One question that has gone relatively unanswered by this large of research is whether cohesion impact success and performance, or success influence cohesion. It may be reasonable to assume that as a team has more success, the high level of performance is what causes the athletes to perceive higher level of cohesion. Success has the potential of allowing strong interpersonal relationships and positive group morale to develop. In 1982, Carron developed an operational definition that describes group cohesion as a multidimensional entity. Carron proposed that cohesion has both task and social properties that comprise both individual and group aspects. In developing a multidimensional model of group cohesion, he further proposed both antecedents and consequences of group cohesion. The antecedents of group cohesion were placed into four categories: (1) leadership (2) situational (3) personal, and (4) team factors (BRAWLEY, 1990). The consequences were identified in two categories: (1) individual and (2) group outcomes. Subsequently, in 1985, Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley developed the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) to quantify group cohesion as a multidimensional property. Since that point, there has been a considerable amount of research dedicated to understanding the relationship of cohesion to many group related factors such as group size (WIDMEYER et al, 1992), group performance (WILLIAMS & WIDMEYER, 1991), sport interaction level (MATHESON et al, 1997), and coaching behavior (WESTRE & WEISS, 1991) to name a few.

Leadership, Cohesion and success

Gardner et al. (1996) described the importance of studying the relationship of coaching behavior, cohesion and success relationship. There are two current issues, which need further consideration. First, group cohesion is hypothesized to positively influence success (WIDMEYER & WILLIAMS, 1991). But the majority of research has shown only a modest positive relationship between cohesion and success (MULLEN & COPPER, 1994). However much of this research is done on non-sport teams or laboratory created groups. Research conducted on actual sport teams with the team success being the unit of measurement the relationship strengthens. A recent effort by Carron et al (2002) compared elite basketball and football teams and demonstrated a strong positive relationship between cohesion and team success. The results showed that there were no differences between the cohesion-to-success and the success-to-cohesion relationship. Grieve (2000) found that performance has more impact on cohesion than cohesion has on performance. Fox (1984) found no significant relationship between cohesion and success, and he shown that there is a conflicting relationship between cohesion and success, and that both positive and negative relationship have found. Therefore, it may be started that cohesion results in consequences which may or may not increase team success.

Second, coaching behavior is hypothesized influence group cohesion. Gardner et al. found a significant relationship of all five coaching behaviors to both social and task cohesion. However, Westre and Weiss (1991); Pease and Kozub (1994) found that the coaching behaviors of training and instruction, democratic, social support and positive feedback were all positively related to cohesion. The autocratic scale was removed from analysis due to poor internal consistency. Ronayne (2004); Moradi (2004) found that increase in athlete's perception of team cohesion positively correlated with perceptions of their coach exhibiting higher levels of democratic behavior, training and instruction, social support, positive feedback and lower levels of autocratic behaviors, punishment-oriented feedback,
and non-reinforcement ignoring mistakes. Westre and Weiss (1991) also found that perceptions of team and individual success strongly related to coaching behavior and team cohesion. Shields et al. (1997) examined team cohesion as it relates to the three individual versions of the LSS. The perceived LSS version and the perceptual discrepancy scores (calculated from the difference between perceived and preferred versions) were most strongly related to team cohesion. Murray (2006) also found that baseball and soccer coaches who had athletes report higher levels of task and social cohesion rated highest in positive feedback and training and instruction.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Twelve teams, comprised of 264 football team members in Iran professional league (16 teams), ranging 17 to 36 participated as subjects. The first four teams were considered as successful teams, the second four ones were considered as less successful teams, and the third four ones were considered as unsuccessful teams.

**Measures**

Three instruments were used in the study: The Demographic Questionnaire, Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS, Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) and the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ, Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1985). Each study participant completed a demographic questionnaire that asked him to report age and academic background.

The LSS measures five dimensions of leadership behavior - training and instruction (TI), democratic behavior (DB), autocratic behavior (AB), social support (SS) and positive feedback (PF). The LSS comes in three versions: the athlete's preference for coaching behavior, the athlete's perception for coaching behavior and the coaches' perception of their own behavior. The athletes in this study only completed the athlete's perceived coaching version. The athlete's perception version of LSS contains forty items prefaced by "My coach...", and is followed by statements such as "sees to it that athletes work to capacity". Each it is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "always" to "never". There are thirteen items for TI, nine items for DB, five items for AB, social support (SS) and positive feedback (PF). The psychometric properties of the LSS have been demonstrated in several studies (for a review see CHELLADURAI, 1990).

The GEQ assess the four dimensions of team cohesion - Individual Attraction to group-task (ATG-T), Individual Attraction to Group-Social (ATG-S), Group Integration-Task (GI-T), and Group Integration-Social (GI-S). The questionnaire contains 18 items that are scored on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Each item is either positively stated or negatively stated. The questionnaire has five items for ATG-S, four items for ATG-T, five items for GI-T, and four items for GI-S. The score for each category is calculated by summing the values and dividing by the number items in that category.

Administration of the GEQ and LSS occurred immediately following the end of season. The athletes were asked to indicate their coach's actual behavior when filling out the LSS. Each gave approval gent on the head coaches' approval. After practice, the coaches or assistant coach brought the team together and questionnaire was always administered by the researcher. Players first completed the demographic questionnaire, then the LSS questionnaire, and finally the GEQ. The instruments were completed individually and anonymously, and the coaches did not have access to the individual informational
RESULTS

- Scale Reliabilities

Previous LSS studies have generally indicated acceptable internal consistency scores for LSS scales, although some problems with the Autocratic Behavior Scale have been reported (CHELLADURAI, 1993). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was utilized to examine the internal reliability of both scales. The internal reliability for the LSS and the GEQ is represented in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LSS Scale</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training and Instruction</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Behavior</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic Behavior</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Feedback</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEQ Scale</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Cohesion</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Correlation Analyses: Leadership and Cohesion

To examine the relationship between coach's leadership styles and team cohesion, we initially conducted a Pearson correlation analysis based on individual data. The significant correlation between the two cohesion scale and the five leadership dimensions are contained in table 2. We found that coach’s behaviors of social support, training and instruction, positive feedback, and democratic were all positively correlated to team cohesion and autocratic behavior negatively correlated to team cohesion.
Table 2 - Relationship between coach’s leadership styles and team cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Training &amp; Instruction</th>
<th>Autocratic Behavior</th>
<th>Democratic Behavior</th>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Positive Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
<td>-0.51*</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.49*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>-0.73*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P ≤ 0.01

- Leadership, Cohesion and Success

In order to compare coach’s leadership styles, we calculated ANOVA with repeated measures and Bonferroni post hoc test. The results indicated a significant difference between coach’s leadership styles, and showed that football coaches exhibited higher in training and instruction and lower in democratic behavior (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1 - Comparison of coach’s leadership styles](image)

ANOVA with repeated measures and Tukey post hoc test was used to compare coach’s leadership styles and cohesion levels of successful, less successful and unsuccessful teams. The findings demonstrated that successful football teams tend to be more cohesive and their coaches exhibited higher level of democratic and social support behavior (see Figure 2&3).
DISCUSSION

Our purpose of this study was to examining the relationship between coach’s leadership styles and team cohesion in professional football clubs. The rationale for this study demonstrated that higher levels of task and social cohesion were related to higher levels training and instruction, democratic, social support and positive feedback, and lower levels autocratic behavior. Few researches in the coaching field have examined the leadership styles coaches use to develop cohesion in sport teams. Our findings especially agree with Ronyne (2004); and Moradi (2004). Wester and Weiss (1991); Pease and Kozub (1994) found that leader behaviors of training and instruction, democratic, social support, and positive feedback were all positively related to cohesion. The results from this study and pervious studies show that coach’s leadership styles and behaviors have a great effect on team cohesion and demonstrated the value role a coach plays in the development of cohesion for his/her team.

The second hypothesis supported the notion that there is significance difference between
coach's leadership styles, and the results showed that football coaches exhibited higher in training and instruction and lower in democratic behavior. With this regard Moradi (2004); Bennet and Manuel (2000) found that coaches place more emphasis on training and instruction while expressing a lower preference for autocratic behavior. Their findings (coaches exhibited lower in autocratic) are in direct contrast to our findings that coaches exhibited lower in democratic behavior. Perhaps one reason in this filed within our study is that the football coaches in professional levels tend to exhibit lower in democratic behavior and higher in autocratic behavior.

Overall, the results from this study showed that there is significance relationship between coach's leadership styles and team success, and the coaches of successful teams exhibited higher levels of democratic and social support behaviors (Echas and Krane, 1993). Alfreman (2005); Fathi (2005); Dexter (2002); Wester & Weiss (1991); Moradi (2004); Range (2002) found significance relationship between coach's leadership styles and team success.

The final hypothesis supported the notion that team cohesion affects team success in a positive manner, as predicted. Results of this study showed that successful teams tend to be more cohesive. For most team sport, primary reason for sticking together is to increase the potential for obtaining success. Especially football is a sport that takes more coordination and corporation, cohesive and success is related to level of and changes in both task and social cohesion. Many researchers believe there is strong relationship between cohesion and success. Carron, Bray & Eys (2002); Murray (2006); Moradi (2004); Hung (2004); Range (2002) found that highly cohesive teams were more successful than teams with lower levels of cohesion. Grieve (2000) found that success has more impact on cohesion than cohesion on success.

In summary, these results support following items: (a) Coach's leadership styles have a great effect on team success and team cohesion. (b) The coaches of successful teams exhibited higher levels of democratic and social support behavior. (c) Team cohesion is a necessary (not sufficient) factor for team success.

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