

Perception of football coaches towards their coaching leadership behavior

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Abstract

Football is the most popular sporting event in the world. It is practiced by every individual with no cultural and gender barriers. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of football coaches towards their own leadership behavior and whether their perception differ due to age, educational background, experience and level of license. Football coaches in the Amhara league football competition were recruited as the respondents in the study. Even though 32 head coaches were selected as a sample of a study from 32 Amhara league football clubs, only 26 head coaches participated in the current study, due to coaches' exclusion criteria. Self-prepared and adapted questionnaires were used to collect the data. SPSS software version 20 is used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics (mean, percent and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (ANOVA) were used for data analysis. The perception of coaches' towards their own soccer specific leadership behavior was found higher (scale mean = $4.17 \pm .50$). Furthermore, the ANOVA test stated that there is no significant difference found between the subscale's mean scores ($F(13, 28) = 2.012, p = 0.533$). A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare the mean differences among the 14 sub scores of soccer specific leadership behavior between ages, educational background, coaching experience and level of license of coaches. As the result indicates that, there was no significant difference among the fourteen sub scores of coaches' leadership behavior ($F(3) = 1.146, P = 0.354, F(3) = 1.656, P = .207, F(2) = .756, P = 0.481$ and $F(4) = 1.196, P = 0.346$ at $P < .05$ level respectively. This shows that even though coaches are in different age groups, different education levels, different coaching experience and license level, they have the same understanding of their leadership behavior. In conclusion, the coaches have a positive perception towards their own soccer specific leadership behavior. Coaches perceived as they often implement all the leadership behavior, but they are not implementing all the leadership behavior always. Having the above conclusion, it is that the coaches let themselves master all soccer-specific leadership behaviors so that they will lead the players effectively to let them reach their playing potential. Finally, future research has to be conducted on the factors that enhance players' performance other than treated in the current study.

Key Words: Soccer, perception, soccer-specific leadership behavior

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I. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Without exaggeration, soccer is one of the most popular sports in the world, engaging people worldwide as players, spectators and TV viewers. Football has remarkable social and economic impacts and it also has a significant role in recreation, health promotion and community building. The sport is practiced by every part of the population in the world. Football can be described as a school of life through which valuable skills can be taught, such as teamwork, dedication, perseverance and healthy lifestyles (Andrew, et al., 2012). The focus on soccer has grown since the huge financial implications of 'spotting a future star' together with increased professional approaches to training and education have encouraged coaches and players to support soccer development programs (Ibid). In Ethiopia, the sport runs at different levels: regional and national league. The Amhara football league is one of the leagues run in the country under the control of the region. 32 male clubs participate in the league (Source: Amhara football federation). There are various factors that contribute to the

success of football players. For instance, a coach's soccer coaches-specific leadership behavior, nutritional factors, coach's attribution, physical and technical efficiency, psychological factors, and training effects are some of the various factors that contribute to the success of football players. The coach's competency and leadership behavior and their knowledge of nutritional recommendation and psychological skill (Anderson, et al., 2002) are considered as the limiting factors recommendations's performance. Athletes and coaches' determination to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills that deals with performance-limiting factors is crucial. The coach has an essential influence on an athlete's performance, motivation and well-being within sport (Jowett & Cockerill, 2002). Reliability, patience, humor, good sportsmanship and honesty are some of the characteristics of football coaches. Effective coaches exert their positive influence on their athletes through their behaviors (Horn, 2002). An important variable hypothesized to mediate the relationship between coaching behaviors and athlete outcomes such as motivation, performance, behavior, beliefs, attitudes, and evaluative reactions is athletes' perceptions of these behaviors (Ibid). The importance of athletes' perceptions of their coach's behaviors for athlete-related outcomes has been recognized in the coaching-efficacy literature (Myers, et al., 2006). And also, considerable research has been conducted to identify the performance limiting factors of the players in soccer (Cockburn, et al., 2014; Nazarudin, et al., 2009). But, most of the previous studies on coaches' leadership behavior have examined individual behaviors to measure tasks and relationships (Chelladurai, 1984; Danielson, Zelhart & Drake, 1975; Smith & Smoll, 1990). Besides the above reasons, there is also a need for further understanding of other behaviors which had not been investigated in the previous study, such as problem solving, clarifying, informing, networking, team building and conflict management. In addition to that, there is interest in understanding the use of different patterns of behaviors by coaches. For this reason, there is a need to examine specific types of the coaches' behavior to increase our understanding of leadership effectiveness. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine the coaches' perceptions towards their soccer-specific leadership behavior and whether their perception differed due to age, educational background, experience and license level. However, this study has practical implications for sports coaches, coaching practice, physical education teachers and practitioners in sport psychology and sports. In particular, for sports teams, it has invaluable benefits related to: problem solving, clarifying tasks, informing, networking, team building and conflict management.

II. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Amhara regional state, which is one of the nine states in Ethiopia. It is located in the northwest part of Ethiopia. In the region, the study was conducted in Central Gondar, North Gondar, West Gondar, South Gondar, West Gojjam, AgewAwi, North Wollo, South Wollo, Waghimra, North Showa zone and Bahiradar city. Cross-sectional study design was employed in the assessment of players' perception towards their coaches' soccer-specific leadership behavior and its relationship with their coaches' perspective. All head coaches who are members of football clubs that participate in the male Amhara league football competition in the year 2021 were recruited as the respondents to the study, but coaches who have less than six months of experience were not allowed to participate in the study as a respondent. Because those coaches who have less duration in the in their leadership activity have not enough experience in their leadership behavior. Based on that, the total numbers of the population for this cross-sectional study where 26 head coaches were selected from 32 football clubs as respondents. Since the target population of the study is manageable, all the target groups were selected as a sample via comprehensive sampling technique.

2.1. Measures

Data for the present study was collected using questionnaire. Self-prepared and adopted questionnaires were employed for data collection. Self-prepared questions were employed to collect data regarding respondent's demographic characteristics, while the Managerial Practices Survey (MPS) instrument of the coaches' version of coach leadership specific behaviors (Coaches Practices Survey CPS coaches' version) were used. This questionnaire was developed by Yukl's (1991) to gather data related to 14 middle range specific behaviors. These were called "managerial practices". Such as: team building and conflict management, developing, supporting, rewarding, recognizing, motivating and inspiring, delegating, consulting, problem solving, planning, monitoring, clarifying, (m) informing, and networking.

2.2 procedures

Prior to data collection, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants by the researchers, and then participants responded to a survey that included measures of a personal information questionnaire, coaches' leadership behavior. Most players have completed the survey during their training time, but some have completed it in their residence. It took about 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data was carefully examined before inputting the data into the database, then quantitatively analyzed using SPSS statistical package software (version 23.0 for windows). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and percent) which were conducted to describe the general information of players and their perception towards coaches' leadership behavior and inferential statistics (ANOVA) were used for data analysis. Moreover, the One-way-ANOVA test was computed to compare the mean differences in coaches' perception towards domains of their own leadership behavior. Item mean and subscale mean score were used to report the result on the Likert scale as per the literature elsewhere.

2.4 Ethical consideration

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The Ethics Review Board of the University of Gondar. This study addressed ethical issues. The study respected the privacy and confidentiality of research participants. Because the study was conducted according to our university's rules, policies, and codes relating to research ethics, consent was obtained from participants in the study to collect the data.

III. Result

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of players

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents of the study

Age			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	20-25 years old	9	34.6
	26-30	13	50.0
	31-35 years old	3	11.5
	34-40 years old	1	3.8
	>40 years old	0	0
	Total	26	100.0
Educational background			
Valid	High school	6	23.1
	College diploma	7	26.9
	University degree	9	34.6
	Master	4	15.4
	Others	0	0
	Total	26	100.0
Profession			
Valid	sport science	15	57.7
	other department	11	42.3
	Total	26	100.0
Coaching experience			
Valid	.5-5 years	8	30.8
	6-10 years	7	26.9
	11-15 years	11	42.3
	16-20 years	0	0
	>20 years	0	0
	Total	26	100.0
Level of license			
Valid	level One	11	42.3
	level 2	5	19.2
	C level	4	15.4
	B level	2	7.7
	No license	2	7.7
	Total	24	92.3
	Missing	2	7.7
		26	100.0

Even though 32 head coaches were selected from 32 Amhara league football clubs as a sample, the questionnaires were filled by 26 head coaches, due to excluding criteria of the study. In the present study, all of the coaches reported their age. From those who reported their age, 50.0 % (n=13) of the participants were found in the age group of 26-30 years old. 34.6% (n= 9) were the second highest, which was grouped under the age of 20-25 years old. As the result indicated, most of the head coaches, 34.6% (n=9) have a university degree, while 15.4% (n=4) degrees degree. But there were participants with high school and college diploma educational backgrounds. The majority of the head coaches, 57.7% (n=15) were sport science graduates, while the remaining coaches' 42.3% (n=11) in profession were not related to the sport science discipline. According to the result, most of the coaches, 42.3% (n=11), grouped under 11-15 years of experience, even though there were

other coaches grouped under 0.5-5 years (30.8%) and 6-10 years(26.9%). Surprisingly, there were 2 coaches without a license even if though the majority of the head coaches, 42.3% (n=11) with one license, while 5 coaches with level-2, 4 coaches C-level, 2 coaches with a B-level license and the remaining 2 coaches were not mentioned about their level of coaching license.

3.2 Coaches’ perception towards their own soccer specific leadership behavior

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Coaches’ perception on Soccer specific leadership behavior dimensions

Soccer specific leadership behavior domains	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower	Upper		
1.Informing	3.62	.75	.43472	1.7562	5.4971	2.76	4.12
2.Planning and organizing	4.17	.17	.09615	3.7596	4.5870	4.04	4.36
3.Clarifying role and objectives	4.47	.28	.16221	3.7687	5.1646	4.20	4.76
4.Consulting	4.16	.40	.23094	3.1663	5.1537	3.76	4.56
5.Motivating and inspiring	4.52	.16	.09238	4.1225	4.9175	4.36	4.68
6.Recognizing	4.04	.17	.10066	3.6069	4.4731	3.92	4.24
7.Monitoring	4.42	.30	.17487	3.6743	5.1791	4.08	4.64
8.Problem solving	4.65	1.46	.84548	1.0155	8.2912	3.44	6.28
9.Supporting	4.20	.08	.04627	4.0037	4.4019	4.12	4.28
10.Managing conflicts	3.88	.37	.21155	2.9692	4.7897	3.48	4.20
11.Networking	3.95	.37	.21351	3.0297	4.8670	3.72	4.38
12.Delegating	4.15	.06	.03741	3.9885	4.3104	4.08	4.21
13.Mentoring	3.91	.27	.15377	3.2451	4.5683	3.68	4.20
14.Rewarding	4.27	.32	.18667	3.4635	5.0698	3.92	4.56
Total	4.17	.50	.07724	4.0169	4.3288	2.76	6.28

Soccer-specific leadership is one of the required behaviors that the coach needs to develop for better coaching practice. The soccer-specific leadership performance was assessed using 42 items (5-point Likert items) in the adopted questionnaire. The questions are grouped into 14 domains with three questions in each domain. The overall scale mean score is found to be 4.17±0.50, which indicated that the coaches perceived their own behavior as they often implemented the listed leadership behavior in their coaching careers. The mean score for each domain indicates that the coach often implements all the behavior in his coaching activities. ANOVA was conducted to test if the coach perceived the leadership behavior differently or not. There is no significant difference found between the subscales mean scores $F(13, 28) = 2.012, p=0.533$. The coaches are perceived they always implement motivating and inspiring the players and a problem-solving role.

Table 3: One way ANOVA test according to age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.243	3	.414	1.146	.354
Within Groups	7.595	21	.362	1.146	
Total	8.838	24			

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare the mean differences among the 14-scores of soccer specific leadership behavior between ages of coaches. As the result indicates, there was no significant difference among the fourteen sub scores of coaches’ leadership behavior: $F(3) = 1.146, P = 0.354$. This result shows that coaches show the same leadership behavior regardless of age group.

Table 4: One way ANOVA test according to educational background

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.691	3	.564	1.656	.207
Within Groups	7.148	21	.340		
Total	8.838	24			

Table 4, indicates that 0.207 is greater than the significant value of 0.05. For this reason, there was no significant effect of educational background of coaches on 14 leadership behaviors of coaches; $F(3) = 1.656, P = .207$. This shows that having a higher level of education does not guarantee a better perception of coaching behavior.

Table 5: One way ANOVA test according to coaching experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.569	2	.284	.756	.481
Within Groups	8.270	22	.376		
Total	8.838	24			

According to table 5, the one way ANOVA test result depicted that there was no significant difference between 14 sub scores of coaches' soccer specific leadership behavior; $F(2) = .756$, $P = 0.481$ at $P < .05$ level. It means that they are showing similar leadership behavior at any experience level.

Table 6: One way ANOVA test according to Level of license

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.468	4	.367	1.196	.346
Within Groups	5.524	18	.307		
Total	6.992	22			

A one-way ANOVA test was also conducted to compare the mean differences between the fourteen sub-scores of soccer specific coaches' leadership behavior. As the result revealed that there were no significant differences between the sub of coaches' leadership behavior; $F(4) = 1.196$, $P = 0.346$ at $P < .05$ level. This shows that coaches have the same understanding of leadership behavior regardless of their license level.

IV. Discussion

Soccer-specific leadership is one of the required behaviors that the coach needs to develop for better coaching practice. For this reason, this study sought to investigate the coaches' perception towards their own soccer-specific leadership behavior by using 42 items (5-point like items) adopted questionnaire. The questions are grouped into 14 domains with three questions in each domain. The overall scale means a score found 4.17 ± 0.50 , which indicated that the coaches often implement the listed leadership behavior in their coaching careers. This shows coaches had positive perceptions towards their own leadership qualities. It was an expected result since many clubs upgraded to, the Ethiopian super league football competition. Although this study assessed the behavior of coaches in a different way, it is consistent with previous studies. For instance, Horne and Carron (1985), using a multidimensional model of leadership, found that Canadian coaches in their study rated themselves higher on training and instruction, democratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback than did their athletes. As the result indicates, there was no significant difference among the fourteen sub scores of coaches' leadership behavior: $F(3) = 1.146$, $P = 0.354$. This result shows that no matter what age group coaches are in, they show the same perception of leadership behavior. Although the influence of coaches' age on the coaches' perception of leadership behavior is not clear, the results of this study are inconsistent with (Case, 1987; Chelladurai and Carron; 1978, 1983; Jambor and Zhang, 1997; Smith, Smoll, Hunt, Curtis, and Coppel; 1979; Serpa, 1990; Vos Strache, 1978). Because they pointed out those coaches differ in their leadership behaviors when dealing with different age groups.

Moreover, there was no significant effect of educational background of coaches on 14 leadership behaviors of coaches; $F(3) = 1.656$, $P = .207$. This shows that having a higher level of education does not guarantee better understanding of coaching behavior. However, it was not possible to find research results that support or challenge the influence of education level on coaches' understanding of leadership behavior. Furthermore, the result depicted that there was no significant difference between 14 sub scores of coaches' soccer specific leadership behavior; $F(3) = .756$, $P = 0.481$ at $P < .05$ level. It means that they are showing similar leadership behavior at any experience level. In addition to this, the result revealed that there were no significant differences between the sub scores of coaches' leadership behavior; $F(4) = 1.196$, $P = 0.346$ at $P < .05$. This shows that coaches have a similar perception of leadership behavior regardless of their license level. Having this in mind, the current study is consistent with a study conducted by Gary and Curtis (1991), who compared the self-reported behaviors of soccer coaches' coaching behaviors relating to risk management at three levels of coaching (NCAA Division I, NAIA, and high school levels). Their results revealed that insignificant differences in selected coaching behaviors existed among the three levels of coaching. This result went in line with the results of a previous study which pointed out that an effective coach can make a difference in the performance of the team by improving his coaching skills and knowing the effect of his own behavior on the athletes (Anshel, 2003). The coaches perceive their own coaches' coaching leadership behavior way in an equal way. The mean score for each domain showed no significant difference between them. This indicated that the coaches often implement all the behavior equally in their coaching activities.

V. Conclusion

This study attempted to seek the perceptions of football coaches towards their own leadership behaviors. The results indicated that coaches have a good perception of their own soccer-specific leadership behavior in their coaching careers. The coaches perceived as their own often implement all the leadership behavior equally in their coaching activities. The coaches perceived that they demonstrated the required task more often effectively in their coaching activities. According to the results, coaches involved in this study exhibit effective leadership behaviors in their respective clubs. As indicated in the result and discussion of the present study, soccer-specific leadership behavior is one of the required behaviors that the coach needs to develop. Performance can be affected by the coach's leadership. A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare the mean differences among the 14 sub scores of soccer specific leadership behavior between ages, educational background, coaching experience and level of license of coaches. As the result indicates that, there was no significant difference among the fourteen sub scores of coaches' leadership behavior ($F(3) = 1.146$, $P = 0.354$, $F(3) = 1.656$, $P = .207$, $F(2) = .756$, $P = 0.481$ and $F(4) = 1.196$, $P = 0.346$ at $P < .05$ level respectively. This shows that even though coaches are in different age groups, different education levels, different coaching experience and license level, they have the same understanding of leadership behavior. The result of the present study shows that the coaches are perceived as often implementing all the leadership behavior. But they need to implement all always leadership behavior. Therefore, the researchers recommend that they let themselves master all soccer-specific leadership behaviors so that they will lead the players effectively to let them reach their playing potential. Also, future research has to be conducted on the factors that enhance players' performance other than treated in the current study.

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