PREFERRED LEADERSHIP STYLE IN COLLEGIATE FUTSAL: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF GENDER

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to examine the moderating influence of gender in preferred leadership style using the MMLS as a guiding conceptual framework. The sample was comprised of 20 male and 10 female athletes from the British Universities and Colleges Sports (BUCS) futsal league. The Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) was used to assess participants' preferred leadership style. This instrument measures five dimensions of leadership: i) democratic behaviour; ii) positive feedback; iii) training and instruction; iv) social support; and v) autocratic behaviour. An oneway, between-subjects MANCOVA was applied to LSS subscale scores to test the moderating influence of gender for preferred leadership behaviour. There was a main effect of gender evident for social support, with greater preference evident for females when compared to males. The highest means for
both genders were evident in autocratic behaviour. The least preferred leadership style for males was training and instruction, while for females it was positive feedback. It was concluded that autocratic behaviour is preferred by futsal players of both genders, albeit that data were collected during a playoffs phase. Moreover, female players showed a higher preference for social support behaviours from their coaches.

Keywords: Leadership, Gender, Futsal.

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership has been identified as a critical aspect of successful organisations across diverse fields (Alon; Higgins, 2005; Chatterjee, 2014). In the sport context, Chelladurai (1980) developed the Multidimensional Model of Sport Leadership (MMSL). This model expounds athlete characteristics, leader characteristics, and situational characteristics. These aspects will have a bearing on the behaviour of a leader, which the model delineates as required behaviour, actual behaviour and preferred behaviour. According to the MMSL, performance and satisfaction are enhanced when there is congruence across these three behaviours.

Studies have indicated the moderating influence of a range of demographic factors in athletes’ preferences of leadership style (Eagly; Johnson, 1990; Amorose; Horn, 2000). One such characteristic is gender and there is evidence to suggest that female players prefer a more democratic leadership style when compared to their male counterparts (Beam; Serwatka; Wilson, 2004). To date, we have not found any study that examines preferred leadership style in futsal. Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to examine the moderating influence of gender in preferred leadership style using the MMLS as a guiding conceptual framework. It was hypothesized that males would report a higher preference than females for the training and instruction component of leadership style and that females would report a higher preference for democratic behaviour.

METHODS

Participants

Volunteer participants were selected from the British Universities and Colleges Sports (BUCS) futsal league. The sample comprised of 20 male ($M_{age} = 21.9$ years, $SD = 1.8$ years)
and 10 female ($M_{age} = 20.7$ years, $SD = 2.8$ years) futsal players. The males had been playing futsal for 4.3 years ($SD = 4.5$ years) and the females for 2.4 years ($SD = 2.5$ years).

**Measures**

The Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) was used to evaluate participants’ preferred leadership style (CHELLADURAI; SALEH, 1980). This scale measures five dimensions of leadership: i) democratic behaviour; ii) positive feedback; iii) training and instruction; iv) social support; and v) autocratic behaviour. There are three versions of the questionnaire and these assess: i) the athletes’ preference for leader behaviour; ii) the coach’s actual leadership as perceived by the athlete; and iii) the actual leadership behaviour as self-reported by the coach. Only the second version of the instrument was used for the purposes of the present study (CHELLADURAI; SALEH, 1980). This instrument is comprised of 40 items and that are attached to a 5-point Likert scale with the verbal anchors: never (1), seldom (2), occasionally (3), often (4), and always (5). Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) found that in four of the five dimensions, the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach’s α), ranged from .70 (social support) to .93 (training and instruction). However, the α coefficient for autocratic behaviour was only .45, which is a distinct weakness of the instrument. The values for test-retest reliability ranged from .71 (social support) to .82 (democratic behaviour).

**Procedures**

Coaches were contacted and a meeting scheduled before a training session in order to administer the questionnaires. A brief explanation of the purpose of the research was provided to participants and they then completed an informed consent form. The LSS was administered thereafter, and the first author was on hand the entire time to address any participant queries.

**Data Analysis**

Univariate outliers were checked using $z$ scores $> ± 3.29$ and the Mahalanobis’s distance method was used to check for multivariate outliers with $p < .001$ (TABACHNICK; FIDELL, 2013). The normality of data was checked using standard skewness and standard kurtosis within each cell of the analysis. The possible confound of years of practice was entered into the analysis as a covariate, therefore a oneway, between-subjects MANCOVA.
was applied to LSS subscale scores to test the moderating influence of gender for preferred leadership behaviour.

RESULTS

The omnibus statistics for the MANCOVA indicated no overall difference, Hotelling’s $T = .491$, $F(5, 23) = 2.25$, $p = .083$, $\eta^2_p = .329$. This lack of difference was associated with low observed power (.621) and a very large effect size, which prompted us to examine the follow-up $F$ tests. There was a gender effect evident for social support, $F(1, 27) = 5.28$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .16$, with greater preference from females when compared to males. Gender accounted for 16% of variance in social support, which is considered a large effect. The highest mean scores for both genders were evident in autocratic behaviour, albeit that gender did not have a moderating influence, $F(1, 27) = 3.67$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2_p = .12$. The least preferred leadership style for males was training and instruction, while for females it was positive feedback (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and MANCOVA for the five dimensions of the Leadership Scale for Sport.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred leadership Style</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$F$ ratio ($df$)</th>
<th>$\eta^2_p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.66 (1, 27)</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.89 (1, 27)</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>3.67 (1, 27)</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>5.28* (1, 27)</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.11 (1, 27)</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\eta^2_p =$ partial eta squared.

*p < .05.
The aim of this study was to assess the moderating influence of gender in preferred leadership style among collegiate futsal players. The research hypothesis was not supported. The findings tentatively suggest a higher preference in both genders for autocratic behaviour and do not support the findings of previous research; for example, Terry and Howe (1984) who reported a preference for training and instruction among both genders in a collegiate athlete sample. The athletes in the present study were evaluated at the end of their season and this may have had a bearing on the findings. Turman (2003) found a trend wherein players shift their preference toward autocratic behaviour late in the season. In playoffs, where there is particular pressure for positive performance outcomes, a preference for autocratic behaviour is exhibited by most players (HALLIWELL, 2004).

Gender had a moderating influence on preferred leadership style, whereas females preferred more social support than males. These findings challenge those of previous studies, which reported a female preference for democratic behaviour (e.g., MARTIN et al., 1999). The females within the present sample were in a phase of their group evolution wherein they were building their identity as a group; it was their first year playing together. Conversely, the male futsal players comprised a more stable group and had greater playing experience, both individually and as a group. As suggested by Sarason, Sarason and Pierce (1990), the preference of the female participants for social supportive behaviours might be related to their need for acceptance as part of a group.

One limitation was the number of participants sampled for the present study. In our study, the statistical power values ranged from .06, for positive feedback to .60, for social support, whereas values of .80 are desirable (TABACHNICK; FIDELL, 2013). Future researchers should seek to recruit larger samples to ensure an adequate level of statistical power. The key message for futsal coaches is that players of both genders prefer leaders who are able to show their authority and have the conviction to take important decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that autocratic behaviour is preferred by futsal players of both genders, albeit that data were collected during a playoffs phase. Furthermore, female participants exhibited a higher preference for social support behaviours from their coaches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
This work was conducted under an academic scholarship supported by the International Cooperation Program CAPES/Science Without Borders UK at Brunel University London, UK. The project was supported by CAPES – Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education within the Ministry of Education, Brazil.

REFERENCES


CONHECIMENTOS DO TREINADOR ESPORTIVO: A VISÃO DOS PROFESSORES DA FORMAÇÃO INICIAL EM EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA

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Daiane Cardoso da Silva
Michel Milistetd
Júlio Cesar Schmitt Rocha
Juarez Vieira do Nascimento

RESUMO: O presente estudo buscou analisar a importância atribuída pelos professores universitários aos conhecimentos necessários ao treinador esportivo e associar tais dados com a experiência docente no ensino superior. Participaram do estudo 40 professores de Educação Física das universidades públicas do sul e sudeste do Brasil, os quais ministravam disciplinas de esportes ou relacionadas ao treinamento esportivo. Os dados foram coletados por meio de um questionário adaptado de Borges (2009) e analisados no