

With which coach shall we practice today? Leadership, cooperation and performance in a coach rotation system in soccer

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Abstract:

Objective: The present study examined the relations between leadership behaviors, cooperation with the coach and performance. The Multidimensional Model of Sports Leadership and the Conceptual Model of Sport Cooperation were employed. **Method:** Using a correlational method, 43 athletes from the sub-14 age group completed the preferred and actual version of the ELD, and the subscale of cooperation with the coach from the QCD-p. Moreover, three head coaches evaluated the 43 athletes with a performance questionnaire. **Results:** The results showed a positive correlation between democratic behaviours, training and instruction, and positive feedback with cooperation with the coach and performance. **Conclusions:** Given the findings, future research should delve in the verified relations and examine the existence of moderating, mediating variables in the results, by employing other methodologies and a more updated model of sports leadership.

Keywords: Leadership, Cooperation, Performance, Soccer, Sports Psychology

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INTRODUCTION

In a sports-related context, an effective leadership can fuel the success of an organization, team, or the performance of individual athletes. In this respect the Multidimensional Model of Sports Leadership (MMSL), developed by Chelladurai, should be noted as it breaks down the different behaviour states of a leader: required, preferred and actual. According to Chelladurai (2007), a better balance of these states, can lead to a better performance and satisfaction level among athletes. Often linked to the concept of sports leadership is the concept of sports cooperation. García-Mas, Morilla, Olmedilla, Quinteiro, Rivas e Toro (2006), indicate that this element is of substantial support to a coach, allowing them to evaluate athletes' natural tendencies in response to distinct sporting situations/circumstances. Nonetheless, the decision to cooperate can be instigated by circumstantial or dispositional factors, or in accordance with a given team's characteristics (García-Mas et al., 2006). Considering that the coach himself can be seen as a stimulus for an athlete to cooperate and compete, and that his or her behaviour can influence the effectiveness of training and competitive performance, the current study attempts to establish whether there are notable correlations between leadership behaviour, cooperation with the coach and athletes performance.

METHOD

Sample. The sample was drawn from a local football club. The respondents numbered 43 athletes from the sub-14 age group (M=13.67 years old), and three main coaches (age M=23.3 years; experience M=4.6 years).

Instruments. We employed the actual and ideal version of the Portuguese Leadership Scale for Sports (ELD, Cruz & Chelladurai, 1985), the coach cooperation subscale of the Portuguese Sports Cooperation Questionnaire (QCD-p, Almeida, García-Mas, Lameiras, Olmedilla, Ortega & Martins, 2012), and a performance evaluation questionnaire.

Procedures. The athletes filled out an ideal version of the LSS. At the end of each rotation the coaches would evaluate their athletes using the performance questionnaire, and the athletes would fill out an actual version of the LSS, the coach cooperation subscale, with the aid of the head coach of his team. The club's adopted strategy for the sub-14 age category has been a rotating system of coaches. The head coaches would each train the team for three weeks, after which at the end of the ninth week, a new cycle would kick in (figure 1). The current study is co-relational resorting to a non-random and convenience-based sample.

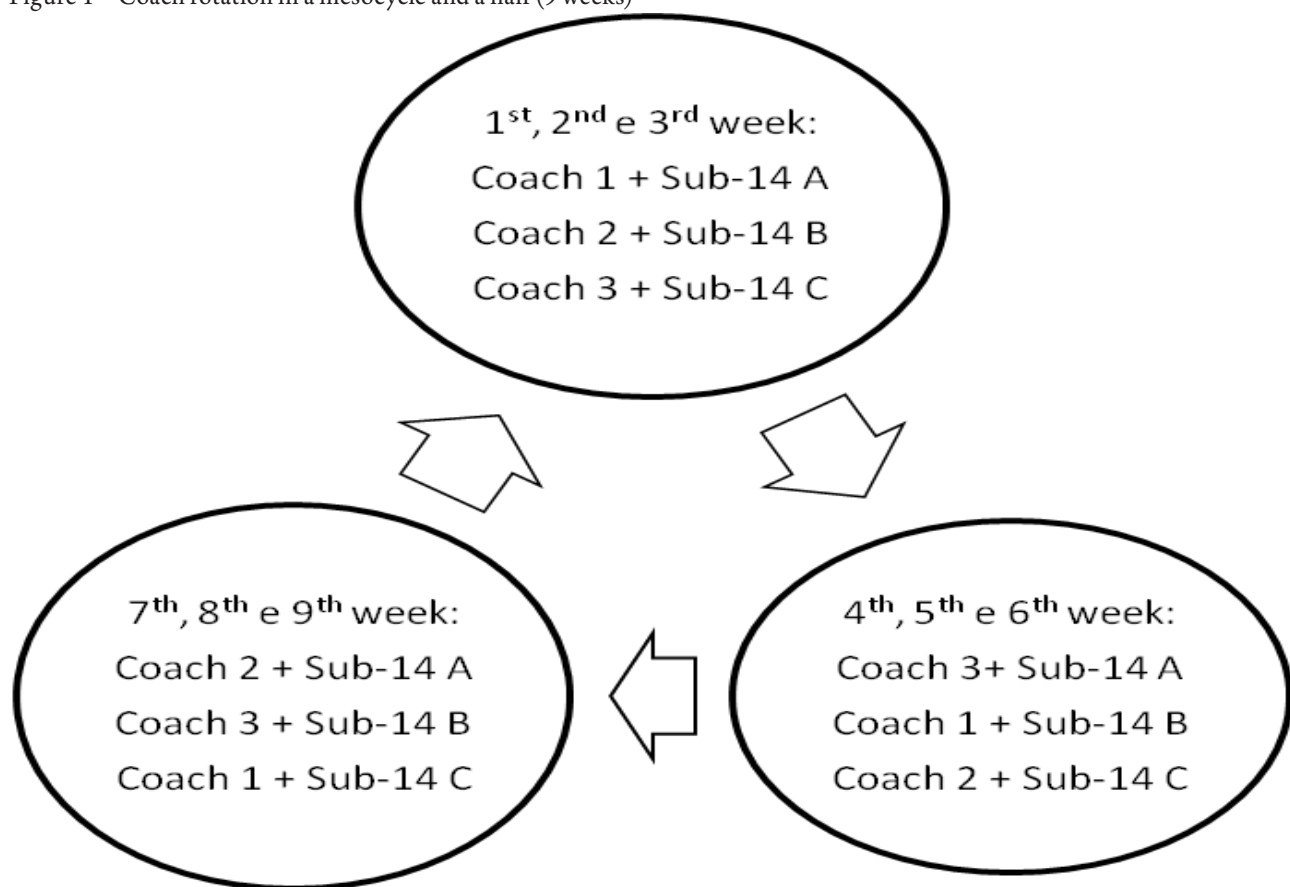
RESULTS

Different results were identified for the three coaches. We confirmed that there is a positive correlation between cooperation with the coach, actual behaviours of training/instruction ($\rho=0.38$, $\alpha=0.05$), and positive feedback ($\rho=0.50$, $\alpha=0.01$). For another coach, there was a clear positive corre-

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Figure 1 – Coach rotation in a mesocycle and a half (9 weeks)



lation between an athlete’s performance in hard passing, the preference for ideal democratic behaviour ($\rho=0.31$, $\alpha=0.05$), and the frequency of actual training and instruction ($\rho=0.39$, $\alpha=0.01$). We also examined the relation between the athletes performance in interceptions and the difference between autocratic ideals and actualities ($\rho=-0.30$, $\alpha=0.05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We determined that frequent training and instruction behaviour, and positive feedback, are closely co-related with perceived cooperation with the coach. This result matches previous studies that identified correlations among the same leadership behaviour/states and other variables (Amorose & Horn, 2001; Murray, 2006; Aoyagi, Cox & McGuire, 2008, Baric & Bucik, 2009, Pawar, Sharma & Yadav, 2009). The connections detected are all the more relevant from a coaching perspective, demonstrating that there certain behaviours that can motivate athletes into attempting to fulfil goals, both personal and the team’s, and thus further reinforcing cooperation with the coach. The model under analysis, however, evidenced low internal consistency among several subscales, and leads us to consider resorting to a more recent model, one that includes for instance advances in the understanding of

neo-charismatic and transformational leadership (Gomes & Cruz, 2006a). The same suggestion has been advanced by Aoyagi et al. (2008), after their own studies produced data that contradicted the MMSL. Additional limitations were encountered generated by the consistency and implementation of the coach rotation system. On several occasions players would ask “With which *mister* are we training today?”, which suggests the athletes are not entirely comfortable/adapted to the rotation system that contextualizes our research.

We believe future studies would benefit from examining the positive loops between cooperation with the coach, performance, leadership behaviour, via a qualitative methodology (Brandão & Carchan, 2010), and by analysing the various moderation and mediating variables, as well as seeking better grounding in an updated leadership model.

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