The Effect of Congruence of Leadership Behaviors on Motivation, Commitment, and Satisfaction of College Tennis Players.

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INTRODUCTION

• The concepts of leadership, motivation, commitment, and satisfaction have been mentioned as integral components of the sport of tennis by leading practitioners, scholars, and organizations (e.g., ARIP, 2002; Bollfertt, 2001; Krise, 1997; Weinberg, 2002). Most research on coaching effectiveness has assumed that coaches greatly influence athletes’ performance, behavior, psychological, and emotional well-being. Similarly, Horn (2002) suggested that the behavior of coaches directly influences the motivation, self-perceptions, perceived success, and achievement behavior of athletes.

• Chelladurai’s (1978) Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) has been used to study leadership in sport. The MML proposes that three aspects of leader behavior need to be in congruence with one another (match) to achieve effective performance and athlete satisfaction. The aspects of leader behavior include required (behavior that is required for a particular situation), preferred (behavior preferred of the coach by the athletes), and perceived (the coach’s behavior as perceived by the athletes). Furthermore, Chelladurai posited that leader behavior was influenced by the characteristics of the situation, the leader, and the members. In the MML, leadership effectiveness, as defined in terms of congruence between required, preferred, and perceived leader behavior, results in member satisfaction and performance outcomes.

• It has been questioned whether a match (or congruence) positively affects and a mismatch negatively influences an athlete’s emotional state, behavior, and/or performance. This study focused on the relationship between congruence of leadership behaviors and positive outcomes in collegiate tennis players.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential positive relationships between the congruence of preferred and perceived leadership behaviors with motivation, commitment, and satisfaction of college tennis players. Specifically, the congruence of leadership behaviors was compared with:

• Intrinsic (self-directed) and extrinsic (external) motivation,
• Motivation (lack of motivation),
• Sport commitment/enjoyment, and
• Certain aspects of athlete satisfaction (e.g., individual performance, personal treatment, and training instruction).

PARTICIPANTS

245 participants [78 males (31.8%), 167 females (68.2%)] from 76 colleges participated in this study.

• Age: mean = 20.01 years (ranging from 18 to 24 years)
• Nationality: 78.8% United States, 22.2% one of 33 other countries
• NCAA Division: 1 (42%), II (9.4%), III (48.6%)
• Collegiate Playing Experience: mean = 11.05 years (ranging from 1 to 5 years)
• Singles Playing Position: mean = 4.47 (ranging from 1st to 20th)

HYPOTHESES

• H1a: The ability level of the collegiate tennis players as defined by NCAA division level will be a determinant of preferred leadership behavior.
• H1b: The ability level of the collegiate tennis players as defined by singles starting status will be a determinant of preferred leadership behavior.
• H2: The gender of the collegiate tennis players will be a determinant of preferred leadership behavior.
• H3: Intrinsic motivation will be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
• H4: Extrinsic motivation will not be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
• H5: Amotivation will not be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
• H6: Commitment and its determinants will be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.
• H7: Satisfaction will be dependent on the congruence between preferred and perceived leadership behaviors.

PROCEDURES

1107 collegiate tennis coaches were informed of the study via email during the last two weeks of the regular season.

• One week later, an email was sent to each coach describing the risks and benefits of the study, directions to complete the survey on a secure website, and a request that he/she encourage and facilitate athlete participation.
• Coaches were asked to forward the email to their athletes.
• Follow-up reminders were sent to coaches each week for a total of four weeks.
• Surveys were conducted in an online format so as to maximize player convenience, secure response confidentiality, and minimize necessary paperwork. Surveys were administered through a third party company named FormSite (http://www.formsite.com).
• Surveys included a demographic questionnaire, the preferred and perceived versions of the Revised Leadership Scale for Sports, Sport Motivation Scale, Sport Commitment Model Scale, and Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

• Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the demographic variables.
• Multivariate multiple regression analyses were utilized to determine the effect of demographic variables on leadership behavior preferences. This statistical procedure addressed hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H2.
• Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the effect of leadership behavior congruence on the motivation, commitment, and satisfaction of the athletes. This statistical procedure addressed hypotheses H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7.

RESULTS

Leadership Preferences:

• Male and female players did not differ in their preferences of coach leadership behaviors.
• Athletes of low and high ability (determined by NCAA division and starting status) appeared to prefer similar types of leadership from their coaches.

Motivation:

• A match (congruence) between athletes’ preferred and perceived coaches’ Autocratic Leadership Behavior (e.g., making decisions without the input of an athlete, presenting ideas forcefully, keeping aloof from an athlete, etc.) was related to:
  • Athletes who were more likely to perform an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction experienced while learning, exploring, or trying to understand something new.
  • Athletes who valued and judged a tennis-related behavior as important.

• A match between athletes’ preferred and perceived coaches’ Positive Feedback was related to:
  • Athletes who were more likely to have the intrinsic desire to engage in a sport-related activity in order to experience stimulating sensations (e.g., feeling energized from playing, fun, and excitement).
  • A match between athletes’ preferred and perceived coaches’ Situation Consideration (e.g., helping athletes identify good reasons to continue training for tennis) and Social Support (e.g., care and concern for an athlete) was related to:
    • Reducing the effects of amotivation (e.g., burnout) in their players.

Sport Commitment:

• A match between athletes’ preferred and perceived coaches’ Autocentric Leadership Behavior was related to:
  • Athletes’ decisions to continue participation in tennis.
  • Athletes’ enjoyment of tennis, and thus commitment to their tennis career.

• A match between athletes’ preferred and perceived coaches’ Positive Feedback was related to:
  • Athletes’ decisions to continue participation in tennis.

Satisfaction:

• A match between athletes’ preferred and perceived coaches’ Autocentric Leadership Behavior was related to:
  • Athletes’ satisfaction with their overall performance, performance improvements, and goal achievements.
  • Athletes’ satisfaction with other coaching elements such as social support and positive feedback.

• Athletes’ level of satisfaction with their teams’ overall performance, goal achievement and performance improvements as well as their satisfaction with the training and instruction provided by the coach.

• A match between athletes’ preferred and perceived coaches’ Training and Instruction Behaviors was related to:
  • Athletes’ satisfaction with other coaching elements such as social support and positive feedback.