

Perceptions of coaching behavior and quality of work life in athletes competing in Iran track and field league 2012-13

Aboulfazl Dehnavi¹, Mohammad R. Ismaili² and Hossein Poursoltani³

¹*Department of Sport Management of Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran*

²*Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran*

³*Physical Education and Sports Sciences Research Institute, Tehran, Iran*

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between perceptions of coaching behavior and quality of work life among athletes competing in the 2012-13 Iranian track and field league. An applied descriptive-survey method was used. Statistical population composed of all athletes participating in Iran's track and field league 2012-13 (n=150). 136 subjects were selected as the sample by using a random sampling technique. The personality, leadership scale for sports (LSS), and quality of work life questionnaires were used to collect data. Cronbach's alpha values were calculated for the leadership styles ($\alpha = .718$) and quality of work life ($\alpha = .785$) questionnaires. Research hypotheses were analyzed through Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S), Friedman, Pearson correlation coefficient, independent samples and one-sample t-tests. The correlated t-test indicated no significant difference between the quality of work life and the subscales before and after the competition season ($P \geq .05$). Various coaching behaviors were ranked by the Friedman test and a significant result was obtained ($p = .001$). Training and instruction had the highest mean ranking from Athletes' views. Pearson correlation test showed a significant relationship between coaching behaviors and quality of work life ($p = .02$). The one sample t-test revealed significant differences between the hypothetical and observed means of the quality of work life before and after the season ($p = .04$). Regarding this result, the acceptable quality of work life is not reached for the Iranian T & F athletes. As found, some coaching behaviors can affect athletes' quality of work life. Coaches should adapt appropriate behaviors to help athletes meet their occupational needs.

Key words: Training and Instruction, Democratic, Autocratic, Positive Feedback, Social Support.

INTRODUCTION

Today, professional sports, as the great international business, are necessarily required to practice scientific and professional management techniques [15].

Beyond the fact of social interests, economic benefits, and efforts to demonstrate personal, national and international competences during competitions, the athletes (albeit, coaches, managers, club owners, and fans) undergo peak pressure and stress. To manage sports in a scientific and professional manner, it is important to determine parameters affecting athletic behavior and success [23]. Among the major parameters influence the productivity or lack of success in a team-based environment is the coach. Martinez believes that coaching is different from other jobs, and the coach is expected to teach and develop individuals with good and moral behaviors. This is a hard and challenging task, and it demands a wide range of skills (Hazhir, 1993).

The evaluation of coaches' behavior and their influence on athletes' behavior and motivation can help improve the coach-athlete relationship and develop better decisions and plans. Understanding the coaching behavior and its link with athlete's motivation will result to take appropriate decisions on planning and preparing sport teams. On the other hand, the position of leadership, coaching behaviors related to athletes, and influences of coaches on athletes all suggest the requirement for paying more attention to the matter [2]. Perceived behaviors of the coach may impact athletes' performance, anxiety, and satisfaction, and the coach-athlete relationship and their views of each other can affect the performance and spirit of both groups [8].

The present study applies the coaching behavior and leadership styles developed by Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) who specified five common leadership styles; namely, training and instruction, social support, democratic, autocratic, and positive feedback. Training and instruction behavior aims to achieve improvement in athletic performance by training the techniques. For sport teams, this refers to coordinating activities of all members. Through the style, the emphasis is on understanding individual strengths and weaknesses and improving the skills. Democratic behavior allows athletes participate in decision making about team goals and how to achieve them. By this style, decisions are not only made by coaches, but players' ideas are also asked for determining techniques, instructions, and other important coaching issues. Autocratic behavior defines as a style where players are not involved by coaches in making decisions about team goals and issues, and players have to obey coaching instructions. By social support style, a coach seeks to meet mutual and individual needs of players, maintain a friendly relationship with them, solve their problems, and resolve challenges among team members. Finally, positive feedback also called rewarding means that the coach cares athletes and praises their effort and engagement [3].

The quality of life (QWL) is an important concept in many developed countries; however, this has also found its own place in developing countries. Assessing the quality of life is effective to identify social needs in order to enhance mental health services, obtain necessary funds and programs, and improve the quality of life [5]. Vaez Mousavi showed that athletes have a better quality of life than non-athletes. The concept of quality of work life (QWL) is associated with an organizational philosophy aiming to enhance the dignity of employees. In some organizations, the QWL programs seek to increase the trust, involvement and problem solving ability among employees, and consequently to improve the satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. The valuable system of life quality focuses on investing on individuals as the most important variable for the strategic management equation; it means that to meet staffs' needs will lead to long-term results for optimization and effectiveness of organizations [14].

In his research, Sourd (2002) regarded the employees' perceptions of their quality of working life as an intermediate force affecting their behaviors which directly influence their morale and intention to leave.

During the current study, the quality of work life is measured according to the Walton pattern based on the following eight factors [12]:

- **Fair payment:** to offer equal pay for equal work; and to set payments with social norms, employees' requirements, and other payment types.
- **Safe and healthy workplace:** to maintain safety and health in physical working environment; and to define reasonable working hours.
- **Providing opportunities for continued growth and security:** to create a context in order to improve personal skills and opportunities for advancement and application of skills acquired; and to offer a certain level of income and employment security.
- **Legalism in the organization:** to offer the freedom of expression for employees without fear of reprisal of the commanders, and the penetration of laws over individual's status.
- **Social dependence of working life:** to perceptions (understanding) of employees about social responsibility of the organization.
- **Whole space of work life:** to make a balance between working life and other living areas like leisure, education and family.
- **Integration and Social Cohesion:** to develop a working climate required to encourage the feeling of belongingness and importance to the organization among athletes.
- **Development of individual capabilities:** to provide work opportunities like self-reliance and self-control, enjoying a variety of skills, accessibility of appropriate information, and work planning.

Khoshbakhti (2004) reported a significant relationship between the leadership styles and the employees' quality of work life [12]. Also, Waitayangkoon (2003) suggested that the QWL should not be imposed in the up-bottom (imperative) style [21].

Lafrenière et al. (2011) found that when the coaches were highly interested in their jobs, they had a tendency to provide support to athletes' independence, and this can improve the coach-athlete relationship [6].

Through assessing the perceived effectiveness of coaching and related outcomes among rugby union athletes, Ian et al, concluded that athletes regard their coaches very effective in terms of motivation, game strategy, technique, and character building, and so they demonstrate a high level of effort, commitment, enjoyment, and self-efficacy in plays [11].

Pappas (2004) suggested that the perceptions scores of athletes' QWL differ across the season; and the results showed that the perceived quality of life has a significant relationship with the coaching behavior between the men; however, no significant relationship was observed between the female[11].

Weiss and Friedrich (1986) carried out a study on the collegiate athletes and their coaches in order to investigate the relationship between perceived coaching styles, coaching behaviors, and athletes' performance and satisfaction. The analysis based on team performance (by wins and losses) revealed that the coaches whose team had lower levels of performance success were perceived as being social support. A brief review on the literature can reveal that all previous studies considered the employees' quality of work life and leadership styles, but no research studied the relationship of these variables among athletes. Due to the importance and necessity for appropriate leadership styles of sport coaches, some questions can be raised about the definitions of leaderships in the T & F league, the QWL among the related athletes, and the relationship between these variables. The current study aims to answer whether, for example, professional sports will impact the quality of work life, although some research shows that athletes have a better QWL than non-athletes [13]? What are the perceptions of athletes about the leadership styles of the T&F coaches? And, is there any relationship between the perceived behavior of coaches and the QWL among the T & F athletes? The present findings are based on the practical aspects, and the authors believe that providing useful information about the coaching behaviors to the T & L coaches can facilitate the application of the behaviors (training and instruction, democratic, autocratic, social support, and positive feedback) in order to improve the athletes' quality of work life.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study uses an applied-correlational descriptive-survey method. The statistical population composes of all athletes participating in Iran's track and field league 2012-13 (n=150). The Morgan table is used to select the sample consisting of 136 subjects. A simple random sampling technique is also applied. Regarding the nature of the research, the personality questionnaire, the leadership scale for sports (LSS) with 28 questions, and the Walton's quality of work life questionnaire with 40 questions are used to collect data. Both questionnaires are rated on a five-point likert scale. Research reliability is determined with the cronbach's alpha test and the values are calculated for the leadership styles ($\alpha = .718$) and quality of work life ($\alpha = .785$) questionnaires.

The QWL questionnaires were delivered between the athletes twice before and after the season; however, only 76 subjects fully answered the items at the two stages. Some athletes presented at the first stage were absent at the end of season, and some did not cooperate with the researcher.

RESULTS

As seen from Table 1, the numbers of male and female athletes were 20 percent and 80 percent, respectively.

The K-S test reveals a normal distribution for the data obtained from leadership style questionnaire, quality of Work life questionnaire - before the season, and the quality of life questionnaire- after the season. Therefore, parametric tests are used to examine the hypotheses.

Table 1- Frequency Distribution by Gender

Index Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	15	20
Male	58	80
Total	73	100

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between the quality of working life before and after the season ($OP \geq .05$, $t = .88$). Also, there are no significant differences between the subscales of fair payment ($OP \geq .05$, $t = .25$), safe and healthy workplace ($OP \geq .05$, $t = .08$), providing opportunities for continued growth and security ($OP \geq .05$, $t = .08$) legalism in the organization ($OP \geq .05$, $t = .44$), social dependence of working life ($OP \geq .05$, $t = 1.02$), whole

space of work life ($OP \geq .05$, $t = .45$), integration and social cohesion ($P \geq .05$, $t = .70$), and development of individual capabilities ($P \geq .05$, $t = 1.1$) before and after the season.

Table 2- Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Quality of Working Life before and after Season with its Subscales

Index Variable	Time	Number	Mean	SD
Quality of Work Life	Before the Season	53	80.73	15
	After the Season	53	80.60	13.53
Fair Payment	Before the Season	71	7.19	2.89
	After the Season	71	7.23	2.36
Safe and Healthy Workplace	Before the Season	73	9.30	2.27
	After the Season	73	9.31	2.01
Providing opportunities for continued growth and security	Before the Season	72	11.38	2.79
	After the Season	72	11.04	2.89
Legalism in the organization	Before the Season	69	11.46	6.16
	After the Season	69	11.18	2.94
Social dependence of working life	Before the Season	73	2.68	1.1
	After the Season	73	2.76	.96
Whole space of work life	Before the Season	67	11.58	2.4
	After the Season	67	11.67	1.72
integration and social cohesion	Before the Season	66	11.74	3.03
	After the Season	66	11.56	2.86
Development of individual capabilities	Before the Season	68	15.64	3.4
	After the Season	68	15.35	2.92

Table 3- Results of Friedman Test for Preferred Subscales of Leadership Styles

Index Variable	Mean Rank	Number	Freedom Degree	χ^2	Significance Level
Leadership Styles	Training and Instruction	5.00			
	Democratic	3.66			
	Social Support	3.30	46	4	169.84
	Autocratic				
	Positive Feedback				

Table 4- Correlated T-test for Quality of Working Life before and after the Season, Coaches' Leadership Styles, and the Subscales

Variable	Index	Quality of Work Life before Season	Quality of Work Life after Season
Training and Instruction	N	52	48
	r	.29	.36
	P	.03*	.01*
Democratic	N	49	44
	r	.25	.37
	P	.07	.01*
Social Support	N	59	54
	r	.12	.16
	P	.33	.22
Autocratic	N	61	56
	r	.10	.19
	P	.41	.14
Positive Feedback	N	59	55
	r	.36	.41
	P	.01*	.01*
Total Leadership Style	N	41	36
	r	.31	.36
	P	.05*	.02*

* A significance level obtained ($P \leq .05$).

Table 5- One sample t-test on Differences between Hypothetical and Observed Mean for Quality of Work Life before and after Season.

Index Variable	M _{cri}	M \pm SD _{obs}	Df	t	P
Quality of Work Life before Season	84	80.29 \pm 15.15	64	-1.97	.05*
Quality of Work Life after Season	84	80.41 \pm 13.05	57	-2.09	.04*

* A significance level obtained ($P \leq .05$).

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the preferred subscales of leadership styles ($P \leq .01$, $\chi^2 = 169.84$).

As seen on Figure 1, from the athletes' views, the subscale of training and instruction has the highest mean ranking (5.00); democratic (3.66), social support (3.30), positive feedback (1.84) and autocratic (1.20) styles are placed in next priorities.

Figure 1: Preference of Leadership Styles from Athletes' Views.

Table 4 shows that there is a significant relationship between the leadership styles of coaches and the athletes' quality of working life before the season ($P \leq .05$, $r = .31$) and after the season ($P \leq .05$, $r = .36$).

Table 5 shows that there is a significant relationship between the hypothetical and observed mean values for the quality of work life before the season ($P \leq .05$, $t = 1.97$) and after the season ($P \leq .05$, $t = 2.09$). In general, because the mean observed ($M_{obs} = 80.29$) is less than the hypothetical value ($M_{cri} = 84$) for the quality of working life before the season, and since the observed mean ($M_{obs} = 80.41$) is less than the hypothetical mean ($M_{cri} = 84$) for the quality of work life after the season, it can be concluded the acceptable quality of work life is not reached for the Iranian T&F athletes..

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A clear study in various levels of sport competitions and championships reveals that a large number of athletes could not demonstrate all their potential abilities due to the lack of motivation and the presence of improper coaching styles and behaviors, no matter how good skills and competences they have. The lack of motivation will, therefore, lead to a reduction in thinking, concentration, focus, control, and decision-making of athletes. All these result in lower productivity and quality of athletes' performance levels [2].

The present study sought to assess the relationship between perceptions of coaching behavior, seasonal performance success, and quality of work life in the track and field athletes. Results showed that the training and instruction style had the highest mean ranking from the athletes' perspective, and that democratic, social support, positive feedback, and autocratic behaviors placed in next preferences. Moreover, the coaches had an acceptable level of performance in terms of leadership training and instruction, democratic, positive feedback, and social support styles as the F&T athletes stated. Wandzliak et al. (1988) examined the behaviors of successful and unsuccessful coaches and the comparative results obtained no significant difference between the behaviors of two groups during instruction and competition sessions[22]. Jabbari et al. (2000) claimed that team coaches have a tendency to human-oriented styles[4]. However, by their investigation on two human- and task-oriented leadership styles among team coaches, Shabani bahar, Erfani, and Parsaju (2011) suggested that team coaches tend to use more task-oriented leadership styles[16]. The same results had been reached by Shahlaee bagheri (2004). Bandali (2012) reported the higher frequency for training and instruction style and the lower level for the democratic style among the coaches of Tehran universities[17, 1]. Similarly, Nami (2012) found both the highest mean and the highest frequency for the training and instruction leadership style[10]. Sullivan and Kent (2003) concluded that the effects of motivation and technique can predict the coaching and leadership styles. By training and instruction, a coach emphasizes on understanding athletes' strengths and weaknesses and improving their skills. The application of such style is somehow justified by the importance of training and enhancement of athletes across different spots in order to compete successfully.

There were significant relationships between training and instruction, democratic, and positive feedback and the quality of work life before and after the season. In contrast, no significant relationships were found between social support and autocratic behaviors. Pappas (2004) pointed out that coaches' behavior and athletes' seasonal performance are interrelated, and that the perception scores of athletes' quality of life can differ over the season[11]. Waitayangkoon (2003) claimed that the quality of work life could not be imposed in an up-bottom style; in other words, the autocratic (imperative) style has no relationship with the quality of work life [21]. But, Khoshbakhti (2004) believed that leadership styles of selling, participating, telling, and delegating are respectively to impact on the quality of work life. It means that selling and participating styles show greater influence on the quality of work life of the subordinates. For human-oriented behaviors, the leader cares about individuals, their wants and needs, and tries to achieve the goals through establishing appropriate friendly relationships with the subordinates. Democratic and positive feedback leadership behaviors seem to be consistent with such styles. The result indicates that when coaches use training and instruction, democratic, and positive feedback leadership styles, the athletes will experience a better quality of working life. Given the role of human-oriented behaviors of coaches for many indices of the working life quality, these findings can be somehow justified.

The quality of working life of the Iranian track and field athletes were not in an acceptable level. As our knowledge, no research has been conducted on the assessment of athlete's quality of work life; however, Mirkamaly and Narengi Sani (2008) reported a relatively optimal quality of work life for the faculty members[9]; however, Yavari, Amirtash,

and Tondnevis (2010) also determined the quality of working life for the faculty members of physical education and sport sciences departments in an intermediate level.[24]. Khoshbakhti (2004) reported the quality of work life for the employees in physical education and sport colleges as being desirable[12]. The quality of working life refers to the individual's ability to satisfy important personal needs using the experiences obtained. A wide range of factors have been suggested for achieving the quality of work life, including fair payment, safe and healthy workplace, integration and social cohesion, providing opportunities for continued growth and security , and etc[18]. Anyway, overwhelming instructions to achieve success are among daily activities the athletes have to perform. Athletes' working status requires having a satisfactory level of physical and mental preparation, and this needs to endure intense physical and psychological stress and exposure potential injuries. Furthermore, competitive success as the product of athletic performance can play a great role in the quality of working life, although the probability of success is not provided for all athletes. These conditions all will likely result to an unacceptable level of the quality of working life for the track and field athletes. In general, some leadership behaviors of coaches can affect the quality of working life among athletes, but the athletes do not have a good quality of work life. Many factors affect the quality of working life of athletes among which behaviors of the coach as the leader and subordinate may impact the quality of working life. Coaches should adapt appropriate behaviors to help athletes meet their occupational needs.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bandali. E. (2011) Relationship between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' stress at university of Tehran. Master Thesis. Faculty of physical education and sport sciences, Azad Islamic University, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran
- [2] Chelladurai ,P., & Riemer , H. (1998). Measurement of leadership in sport.
- [3] Advances in sport and exercise psychology measurement , 227-253.
- [4] Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, S. D. (1978). *Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Science*. 3, 85-92.
- [5] Jabbari. G.R., et al. (2000) *The Movement Journal*, 6, 103-120
- [6] Fortinm, A., Soubhi,H., Hundon, C. (2008). Relationship between Quality Of Life and Physical Education: Secondary Analysis from the Quebec Survey. Department of Family Medicine Sherbrook University, Quebec, Canada.
- [7] Lafreniere. M. A.K., Jowett. S., Vallenrand. R. J. (2011). *Journal Psychology of Sport and Exercise* Volume 12, Issue 2, Pages 144–152.
- [8] Martinez, Rainer. Sport Psychology. Hajir, F (Translated). (1993) First Printing. Tehran. University Jihad publication. 2. 98-108.
- [9] Meeus .M. S. P., Serpa. S., De Cuyper.B. (2010). *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 4, -323-340 ©2010 Human Kinetics, Inc.
- [10] Mirkamali. M. & Narenji Sani, F. (2008) *Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education*, No. 48, 74-107.
- [11] Nami, A. (2011). Relationship between leadership style and emotional intelligence of coaches of Tehran University, Master Thesis, faculty of Physical Education and sport sciences, Azad Islamic University, Central Tehran Branch, Iran.
- [12] Pappas, G. D. (2004). Perceptions of Coaching Behavior, Seasonal Performance Success, and Quality of life: Assessing Relationship over the course of a season. Department of Physical Education, Health and Sport Studies. Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.
- [13] Khoshbakhti, J., Mohammadi, E., Asadi, H., (2004) *The Movement Journal*, 24, 129-149.
- [14] Ramezaninejad, R. (2010) Relationship between leadership styles of coaches and group cohesion in Iranian Pro League, *The Olympic Quarterly*, Yr. XVIII, No. 1.
- [15] Reginald, SH. (1990). *Personnel Journal*. Vol 69, pp 58-61.
- [16] Robison, L.(2003). The business of sport. In B. Houlihan (Ed), *Sport and: society a student introduction*: 156-183.
- [17] Shabani bahar, G.R., Erfani, N.A., Parsaju, A. (2011). *The Sports Management*. No. 8. 93-105.
- [18] Shahlayi Bagheri, J. (2004) The relationship between leadership styles of world wrestling coaches and their success. PhD Thesis, Faculty of physical education and sport sciences, Tarbiat Moallem University, Tehran, Iran.
- [19] Sharifzadeh, F. & Kheirandish, M. (2009) *The Management Research Journal*, No. III, 29-52
- [20] Srud John. Linda. K. (2002). " Faculty members morale and their intention leave". *The Journal of Higher education cloumbus*.
- [21] Sulliva. P. J., Kent. A. (. (2003). *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*. Volume 15, Issue 1.
- [22] Waitayangkoon, Chalermopol.(2003). "Quality of worklife (QWL): International perspective with that aspect, university of north Texas". Consultant scriManoplaw office, Bangkok, Thailand.
- [23] Wandzilak, T., Ansoerge, C.J., & Potter, G. (1988). *Journal of Sport.Behavior*, 11, 78-88.

- [24] Williams, J. M. & Krane, V. (2001). Psychological characteristics of peak performance. In J. M. Williams (Ed), applied sport psychology: personal. Growth to peak performance: 137- 147.
- [25] Yavari, Y., Amirtash, A.M., Tondnevis, F. (2010). Comparisons of the quality of working life and its subscales among the faculty members of state collages and departments of physical education and sport sciences of Iran,