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Coach Leadership Behaviour and Athlete Mental Health: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of coach leadership behaviour and athlete mental health among Selangor individual sport athlete. Adopting a quantitative survey questionnaire, 93 SUKMA individual sport athletes will participate in this study to identify their perception coach leadership behaviour and determine their mental health symptoms of the four major mental disorders: Anxiety Disorder, Depression, Suicidality and Substance Abuse. By this, the study will find the whether those athletes experiencing any mental health symptom that influence by one of the coach leadership behaviour. Leadership Scale of Sports (40) items are used to find the coach leadership behaviour perceived by the Selangor individual sport athlete and Symptom Assessment Measure-Adult (11) items used to find the mental health symptom.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the existing literature of relationship between perceived coach leadership behaviour and four mental health symptoms: anxiety disorder, depression, suicidal behavior and substance abuse among individual sport athletes. The outcome of this study identified the perceived coach leadership behaviour and mental health symptoms experience by individual sport athletes.

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1. Introduction

Athletic coaches are essential in getting good results for athletes. It has been stated that competent coaches place a strong emphasis on the psychological development of their athletes as well as their interpersonal interactions (Malloy & Kavussanu, 2021). Besides that, in recent years, mental health research has risen and there are several studies show that athletes experience mental health difficulties (Chang et al., 2019). Thus, Xanthopoulos, Benton, Lewis, Case and Master (2020) states that coaches can impact an athlete's mental health and Thurston (2017) has highlighted that coaches' pressures, demands and expectations might affect athletes' mental health. Moreover, Jooste and Kubayi (2018) study has shown the positive impact of coach behaviour on athletes' mental health, especially in competitions. While coaches' behaviour positively affects athletes' psychological and behavioural states, it's important to be mindful of the manifestations and effects of inappropriate coach behaviour. However, in Malaysia, coaches do not receive a proper accreditation, lack of proper and sufficient training (Abd Karim & Razak, 2018). The uncertainty of their coaching orientation, lack of possibilities, and coaching education curriculum are some of the major obstacles that coaches in Malaysia face (Abd Karim, 2016). These aspects could cause ineffective coaching behaviour, that may affect the athlete mental health. Further explain by Rao and Hong (2015), ineffective coaching behaviour were linked to athletes' lower mental health and higher rate of depression (Jia, Ching, Govindasamy and Meng, 2022).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Coach Leadership Behaviour

Bennett (2021), in every element of sports, coaches use a range of leadership behaviour to motivate and inspire their athletes. Therefore, while coaching or leading athletes, it is critical to understand what each leadership behaviour includes as well as how athletes may respond to each type (Heil, 2018). The leadership behaviour that coaches employ can ultimately determine whether or not a team will be successful. The leadership behaviour that athletes like in their coaches, as a result, may have a substantial influence on their overall success as athletes (Heil, 2018). Lameiras et al. (2017) summarised Chelladurai's (1990) five dimensions of leadership.

Thurston (2017) observed that one of a coach's tasks is teaching the athlete skills. This coaching leadership behaviour focuses on enhancing athlete performance. Where the coach plans, structures, and directs all actions while participating in training and competition. He or she interacts with athletes, but it's to motivate them and teach them skills, strategies, and tactics. The training and instruction type coach gives athletes the tools to handle problems on their own, pushes them to develop internal performance standards, and helps them become self-aware.

According to Raidbard (2018), coaches must assist athletes to reach their best potential and find joy in athletics. Democratic leaders prioritise personal accomplishment over community goals while engaging followers. Besides, a democratic leader believes all team members should be treated equally, which affects the coach's job. Like so, democratic leadership improves athlete role clarity, team happiness, team cohesiveness, athlete and team communication, and athlete and team performance.

In coach autocratic leadership, the coach has total control over his or her athletes' behaviour. This strategy helps the coach to keep control while boosting athletes' discipline and organisation (West, 2016). The autocratic behaviour fosters a controlled climate favourable to achieving the group's goals by enhancing organisational capacities and fostering self-control. Some athletes view authoritarian coaches as important people who can help them achieve their goals (Cruz & Kim, 2017). Heil (2018) stated that authoritarian leadership leads athletes to face heightened anxiety and decreased performance. Yet, some people who follow an autocratic leader believe their leader is doing a good job, thus they feel comfortable with this form of leadership (Haslam et al., 2020). Not everyone agrees with authoritarian leadership, but some do. This leadership approach causes some athletes to lose control of decision-making (Haslam et al., 2020).

Social support leadership behaviour is where the coach helps athletes with personal difficulties while keeping athletics enjoyable (Tucker, 2017). This leadership approach affects athletes because coaches know their needs and objectives inside and outside of sports (West, 2016). When athletes think their coach supports them, they seek encouragement from them more often (Bennett, 2021). Social support coaches may foster a feeling of community among their athletes. Team leaders may exhibit real care for their athletes' well-being while developing a strong team spirit. Social support coaching leadership promotes athletic teamwork. This leadership behaviour focuses on the athlete's requirements and provides a clear reason. The coach focuses on the athlete's personal needs and wellbeing in addition to his or her performance. The sociable, supportive coach assists athletes with emotional difficulties, helps group members resolve issues, does special favours for athletes, and encourages athletes to confide in them, as they're liked, cherished, and respected. Social support coaching eliminates coercion, pressure, and demands (Bennett, 2021).

Positive feedback leadership aims to encourage athletes through constructive criticism (West, 2016) and monitor their athletes' development and triumphs and assist them to reach their goals. West (2016) cites Martens (1987) definition of positive coaching feedback, which includes criticism, information, and neutral feedback, these are the three ways coaches may help and inspire athletes. Athletes gain from constructive criticism because it allows coaches to offer helpful remarks and development ideas. The coach tells the athlete which acts were helpful. In addition, according to Thurston (2017), positive feedback coaching leadership focuses on the coach who appreciates their athletes and offers the appropriate replies to boost their performance, motivation, general growth, and psychological development.

2.2. Athlete Mental Health

According to Perry, Champ, Macbeth, and Spandler (2021), the phrases "mental health" and "mental sickness" interchangeably have same meaning. Typically, mental illness is thought of as a diagnosable “disease” or “disorder” that is associated with a variety of experiences (such as depression, anxiety, drug or alcohol addiction, obsessions, psychoses, and so on) that have an impact on a person's thinking, emotion, mood, and behaviours (Perry, Champ, Macbeth, & Spandler, 2021). Gucciardi, Hanton, and Fleming (2017) studied mental health in elite sports, defining them as those in which "excellent performance underlying innovation, success, and competitive advantage." According to Gucciardi et al. (2017), culture, sport type, and gender impact athletes' perspectives on seeking psychiatric consultations or therapy for mental health issues. Athletes are afraid to seek mental health therapy because they fear being labelled weak, flawed, or

psychologically unfit and treated unfairly. Gucciardi et al. (2017) studied the influence of coach regulation on teenage netball athletes. Regulating coaching practices were linked to the low liveliness and learning among the study's participants. However, Hayslip (2020) also found that the kind of sport (team vs. individual) was a predictor of depression, with those who played team sports having lower depression rates.

According to Thurston (2017), anxiety disorder is the most frequent mental health illness in America, affecting 18-20% of the population. Anxiety symptoms include tremors, anxiousness, perspiration, excessive concern, and exhaustion. However, this matter of study on athletes are rare. Despite that, according to annual survey more than 85% of sports trainers knew their athletes had anxiety (American College Health Association, 2018). However, many athletes reported feeling worried, which might contribute to physical, cognitive, and social disadvantages. Thus, female athletes had greater anxiety levels than males (Xanthopoulos et al., 2020). Furthermore, according to Seljaas (2019), the feeling of pressure to perform at a level higher than they believe they are capable of causes athletes to experience performance anxiety. The fact that many athletes specialise to become exceptional and they are under near-constant pressure to develop and perform well, this may cause them to have performance anxiety. As an elite athlete, when they experience increased levels of performance anxiety their overall performance in sports will decline.

Depression is often considered hereditary or biological. Social and environmental factors can also cause depression. Sadness, frequent sobbing, emptiness, hopelessness, and helplessness are depressive illness symptoms. Depression can cause low self-esteem, irritability, rage, lethargy, lack of motivation, food and sleeping changes, and suicide ideations, gestures, or attempts, these symptoms diminish a person's functionality (Thurston, 2017). According to Xanthopoulos et al. (2020), depression among athletes ranges from 10 to 23.7 %. Depression studies among athletes have generated varied findings, with some showing lower rates than among non-athletes and others showing comparable rates. Furthermore, Xanthopoulos et al. (2020) employed the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale to detect depression in 465 collegiate athletes over a three-year period. Besides that, Wolanin, Hong, Panchoo, and Gross (2016) showed that 23.7% of athletes in research exhibited clinically significant depressive symptoms and 6.3% reporting moderate to severe depression. Track-and-field athletes had the highest depression rates. This implies that sport may affect depression risk. Multiple studies found by Xanthopoulos et al. (2020) state that solitary athletes are more prone to feel sadness than team athletes. This may be due to the attribution process that happens after defeating a team opponent. Athletes were more likely than non-athletes to experience melancholy and/or anxiety, although depression rates were lower.

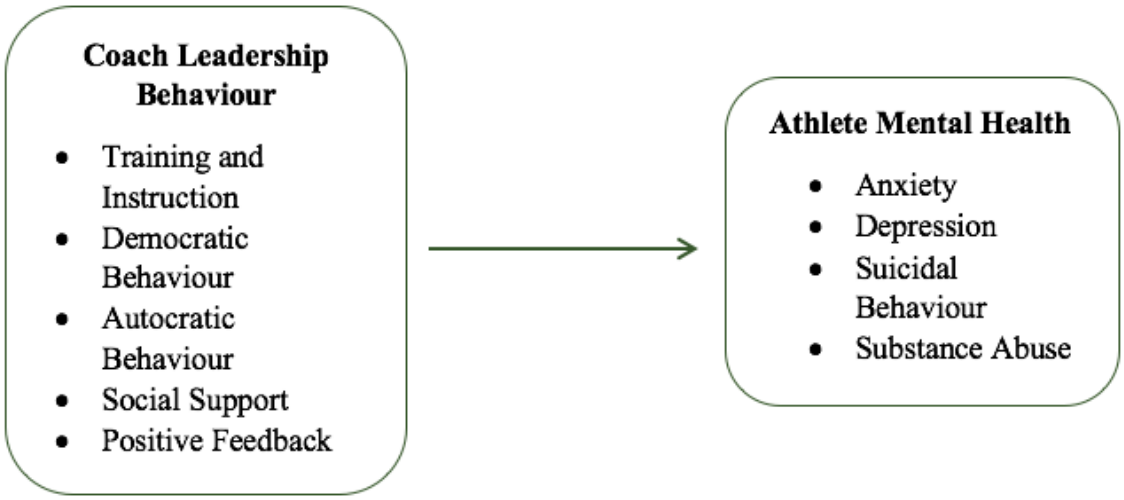
Thurston (2017) states suicidal behaviour as the desire and readiness to kill oneself. To indulge in this extreme behaviour, one must feel hopeless, alienated, and without support, hence our civilization has more suicides. Besides that, Goebert and Matthews (2017) depression and substance addiction raises the probability of suicidal behaviour. Thus, there are 90-95% of suicide victims had another mental health issue. According to Pillon et al. (2018), a vast number of risk factors have been discovered in the context of suicide and alcohol/drug use, as well as family history. Besides that, supported in Xiao (2020) that suicide is a significant public health concern, and it remains the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 10 to 34 years in the United States. Suicide death rates have climbed more than 35% from 1999 (10.5 per 100,000) to 2018 (14.2 per 100,000), with a greater increase among men, young adolescents, racial/ethnic minorities, and sexual

minority youth (Xiao, 2020). However, the risks of engaging in suicidal behaviours differ across developmental stages.

Substance use problems are a cultural pandemic, especially among young individuals and alcohol is the most abused legal drug, where over 134 million adults drink alcohol. According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (2014), more than 22 million 18-years old abused illicit substances in 2013 and 19.8 million people aged 12 and older used marijuana (Thurston, 2017). De Grace, Knight, Rodgers, and Clark (2017) conducted an important qualitative study in which the past researchers interviewed 20 athletes who participated in a variety of different sports at a variety of different levels of engagement to gain a better understanding of the impact of athletics on substance abuse and addiction. Thus, De Grace et al. (2017) discovered that all of the participants stated that they had been exposed to illegal substance usage throughout their school years. According to the findings, the participants would first rely on athletic involvement to deal with tough or even traumatic events, but would eventually turn to drug misuse in order to deal with these concerns. Some particularly sensitive individuals may acquire an addiction to the environment of sports culture (De Grace et al., 2017). Furthermore, Hayslip (2020) study of athletes' knowledge, attitudes, and usage of painkillers found that most athletes thought there was nothing wrong with using painkillers to compete without pain. Many students used painkillers before sporting events to perform while wounded and these athletes did not realise painkillers may have bad consequences.

As shown in Figure 1, the intent of this framework is to emphasize the relationship between coach leadership behaviour and athlete mental health among Selangor individual sport athlete. Coach Leadership Behaviour is the independent variable with five factors: training and instruction, democratic behaviour, autocratic behaviour, social support, and positive feedback. Dependent variable is athlete mental health with four mental health disorder: anxiety, depression, suicidal behaviour and substance abuse.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for Coach Leadership Behaviour and Athlete Mental Health among Selangor Individual Sport Athlete.



3. Discussion

This study examines how coaching behaviour affects an athlete's mental health. Therefore, this helps sports organisations recognise mental well-being of their athletes as reference or guidance. This research will spread awareness to coaches in hope to nurture their athletes' mental health effectively. Besides that, with this study athletes can be more aware of their rights and shield them from any abuse of power while engaging in work with their coaches. Besides, sport psychologists can now better grasp how coach leadership affects athletes' mental health and come up with treatment or rehabilitation. This study might involve academics' knowledge of how coach leadership affects athletes' psychological and physiological states during competition.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the awareness of athlete mental health is very crucial as it involves a person's health and life. Thus, to enhance athlete's performance and create a better national sport committee that makes a safer and healthier environment for coaches and athletes to work. However, to achieve this ambition it is important to identify the best leadership behaviour that fits with the nature of the sports and athletes. Therefore, coach leadership behaviour needs to be improved in the future to ensure that athlete mental health is in an excellent state.

Moreover, it is clear that individual sport athlete have stronger bonds between their coach compare to team sport athlete where they communicate with their coach as a group most of the time. Hence, individual sport athlete's mental health will show more negative result in this study compare to team sport athletes. This is because individual sport athlete have more time to interact with their coach and their relation is even greater as they interact personally. Furthermore, with this result, authorities in the sports committee will be more aware and seek ways to create a better working environment in sport industries. Besides, stand stronger on athlete's rights and welfare, in order to build safer for those who have worked hard in representing the country, show the best appreciation to them. Despite decreasing the mental health rate and increasing coach and athlete performance.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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