

# Analysis of Coaches' Leadership Style and Its Impact on Athletes' Satisfaction in University Football Teams

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**Abstract** Leadership style is a critical factor in achieving success in any field or goal. In sport, it is necessary to consider the complementarity between the coach's leadership style and sporting satisfaction to achieve team success. In this study, we examine this factor using 194 male football players from public university teams. The research methodology aims to examine the multidimensional model of leadership style to understand the relationship between the five types of leadership styles training and instructions, social support, positive feedback, democratic leadership and autocratic leadership and athletes' satisfaction. Both aspects were captured through (i) the Leadership Scale of sports to assess leadership style and (ii) the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire to assess athlete satisfaction. SPSS was used in statistical analysis of data. From the correlation results, the relationships between all facets of leadership style (training and instruction, autocratic style, democratic style, social support, and positive feedback) and athlete satisfaction are significant. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis found that autocratic leadership was negatively associated with athlete satisfaction. In contrast, a positive relationship was found for the styles of training and guidance, democratic leadership, social support and positive feedback. The relationship between the coaches' leadership style and the athletes' satisfaction is underlined by the results of this research. The leadership style

practised by the coach, with which the athletes are satisfied, achieves the desired goal of promoting quality education.

**Keywords** Coaches, Leadership Style, Quality Education, Football, Athletes

## 1. Introduction

In the field of sport, leadership is seen as a fundamental factor in social interaction processes, group cohesion and sporting development and activity, through which the highest possible level of team efficiency, effectiveness and performance can be achieved. In particular, successful leadership can directly influence the style and activity of individuals and help them achieve their desired goals through positive interaction and communication [1].

Coaches' leadership styles can have a significant impact on the satisfaction of athletes who are part of a team [2]. Leadership styles can be categorised as task factor, decision factor and motivational factor. Task style involves giving instructions on tasks related to performance; decision-making style can be categorised as either autocratic or democratic in decision-making; and motivational style of coaches involves giving either positive or negative input to players to improve their own

performance [3].

Sports coaches can have a profound impact on athletes, especially on their satisfaction, regardless of their level of participation [2]. Communication is important in improving athletes' perceptions of their coaches and deepening their sense of mutual connection. Such communication scenarios indirectly promote satisfaction with physical training and performance, self-motivation, goal achievement and passion for the sport. Athletes' satisfaction with their coaches can lead to integrated sports organisation and subsequent success. Clear and concise communication also leads to a better understanding of the players' role, and helps to develop skills and build trusting relationships [4]. Therefore, communication goals must coexist on and off the sports field if Iraqi university football teams are to be successful.

The efficient selection of appropriate leadership styles provides an organisation with competitive advantages [5]. In sport, leadership styles can play an important role in the growth process and performance of teams. However, the effects of different leadership styles of coaches on the performance of Iraqi university football teams have not yet been studied. In this sense, there is still a gap in understanding the relationship between coaches leadership style and athletes' satisfaction. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the effects of coaches' actual leadership style and athletes' satisfaction of Iraqi university football teams. To fill this gap, the study is divided into two parts. First, it aims to determine the correlation between coaches' leadership style and athletes' satisfaction in Iraqi public university football teams. Second, the effect of coaches' leadership style on athletes' satisfaction will be investigated (i.e. how a particular coaching style affects athletes' satisfaction).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Leadership Style of Coach

The first few studies on leadership in sport focused on examining the personality traits of coaches, while later attempts focused on determining the specific leadership styles of coaches. In contrast to earlier studies, the present work has largely focused on the situational leadership of coaches and has attempted to integrate situational and behavioral factors of leadership [6].

Research on leadership began in the 1930s and focused on the behavioral approach in the 1950s. In recent decades, several leadership models and instruments based on the leadership style of coaches in the sport environment have been developed to measure the leadership style of organizations. For example, some researchers (see e.g. Smoll and Smith and Chelladurai and Saleh) have explained the value of leadership models in the sport context [7-9]. Extensive research has also identified the

important factors of coaching style, particularly of sports coaches, in relation to basic psychological needs [10], self-efficacy [11], intrinsic motivation [12,13], need satisfaction [14], anxiety [15], team cohesion [6], and player satisfaction [16]. Researchers have also identified the effects of sports coaches' feedback behavior on the intrinsic motivation and satisfaction of elite athletes [9].

Chelladurai [17] argued that leadership traits such as personality, experience, and skills can influence leadership style. Studies have reported the relationship between personality traits and leadership styles with autocratic [18] and authoritarian [19] orientation and performance requirements [17]. In these previous studies, the influence of the leader's personality trait on leadership style is situational. Barnaschone [20] found that certain personality traits must be successfully brought to bear in stressful match situations, such as 15- and 30-second time-outs during a match where a coach must make a decision about personnel and strategy within a short period of time. Chelladurai [17] suggested that a leader's need for performance can reverse the goal of competitive athletes striving for uniqueness. In general, a coach is expected to lead athletes to greater performance Miner [21] suggested that the personality traits of leaders may only be present in the sporting environment but not in other situations.

### 2.2. Athletes Satisfaction

Satisfaction in sport has been widely studied along with many variables related to leadership [22,23]. Athlete satisfaction has also been highlighted in theoretical frameworks. For example, Russell [24] considered satisfaction as prior aspect (i.e., personal factor) and outcome (i.e., individual outcomes) in the consistency model, while Soyer, Sari, and Talaghir [9] considered satisfaction as a predicted outcome of coaching effectiveness. In addition, satisfaction has been used as a dependent variable in research on goal orientations [25], student perceptions of motivational climate and satisfaction [26], and coach player compatibility [27].

Many researchers in the field of sport psychology consider athlete satisfaction as either an antecedent or outcome variable [28]. In the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) [17], for example, satisfaction and performance are listed as outcome variables. Subsequent research based on the MML has largely focused on linking leadership dynamics to athlete satisfaction. In general, satisfaction has been widely used in studies of leadership based on the intended outcomes. However, measures of satisfaction vary widely in terms of general forms of athlete satisfaction [29], satisfaction with leaders/coaches [25], satisfaction with personal performance [30], satisfaction with personal outcome [6], satisfaction with teams [31], satisfaction with team performance [32] and satisfaction with overall engagement [33].

Pilus and Saadan [34] reported that team integration is

one of the most important factors in athletic satisfaction on a university hockey team. Russell [35] reported a positive emotional state (i.e., a level of satisfaction) in athletes after assessing the complex structures, processes and outcomes associated with the athletic experience. The level of athletes satisfaction can be determined by contrasting the demands of the athlete and the perception of what happening in the psychological, physical and environmental domains.

### 2.3. The Relationship between Coaches' Leadership Style and Athletes' Satisfaction

Yardley [36] suggested that leaders can “shape the environment, the atmosphere, the nature of activities, distribute reinforcement or punishment and act as role a models”. Fox, Rejeski [37] manipulated a course leader's leadership style to determine its impact on participant enjoyment. The course instructors used leadership styles characterized as socially interactive, energetic, pleasant, technically correct and supportive. The results suggest that participants experienced a great deal of enjoyment with certain leadership styles. In addition, sports research has found a positive relationship between coaching (i.e. leadership style) and sport satisfaction. Specifically, when coaches exhibit a coaching and instructional, autocratic, democratic, socially supportive and positive feedback style, athletes' satisfaction increases [23].

Coaches, however, may adopt a training style that is not preferred by the athletes. If players are unhappy with the coach's training method, the team is not a cohesive unit, while some athletes may even leave the team [6]. Coaching styles can keep a team intact. As the centre, leader and teacher of the team, the coach must find an appropriate way to manage the team and keep it together. The role of the coach is important for the success of the team [38]. The interactions between coaches and athletes are satisfactory when the goals and beliefs of the athletes are aligned with those of their coaches [39].

Previous studies have used MML to determine the relationship between coaches' leadership style and athlete satisfaction. By using these two variables, one branch of

the three subscales of coaches' leadership style can be measured, namely, actual leadership style, required leadership style and athletes' preferred leadership style. The antecedents of these three style types influence the other types, including leadership, member characteristics and situations. In general, the basic idea of MML states that sports performance and satisfaction depend on the harmony between the actual leadership style, the required leadership style and the leadership style preferred by the athletes [17].

Previous research on leadership has focused on preferred and desired leadership styles and satisfaction [15]. However, the relationship between actual leadership style and satisfaction has not received much attention in the literature, especially the coaching style in Iraq. As Chelladurai and Riemer [40] pointed out the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction depends on differences in coaches' leadership styles. Coaches tend to use different styles towards athletes and this scenario seems to be the best approach to understand the relationship between coaching and training satisfaction. The literature has also shown that differences in coaches' styles are positively related to coaching satisfaction [41].

The actual leadership style displayed by coaches can have direct impact on athlete performance and satisfaction. This style is divided into five sub-leadership styles based on the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) instrument: (1) training and instruction: how the coach improves player performance; (2) autocratic style: how the coach asserts his own authority; (3) democratic style: how the coach encourages collective decision-making; (4) social support: the coach's concern for the welfare of others; and (5) positive feedback: the positive reinforcement that the coach provides. These five styles can be used by coaches to influence athlete satisfaction [8].

## 3. Method

The systematic steps taken to achieve the objectives of this study are shown in Figure 1. The steps of Figure were designed to explain the method of this research. These steps are embedded in section 3 and explained in detail.

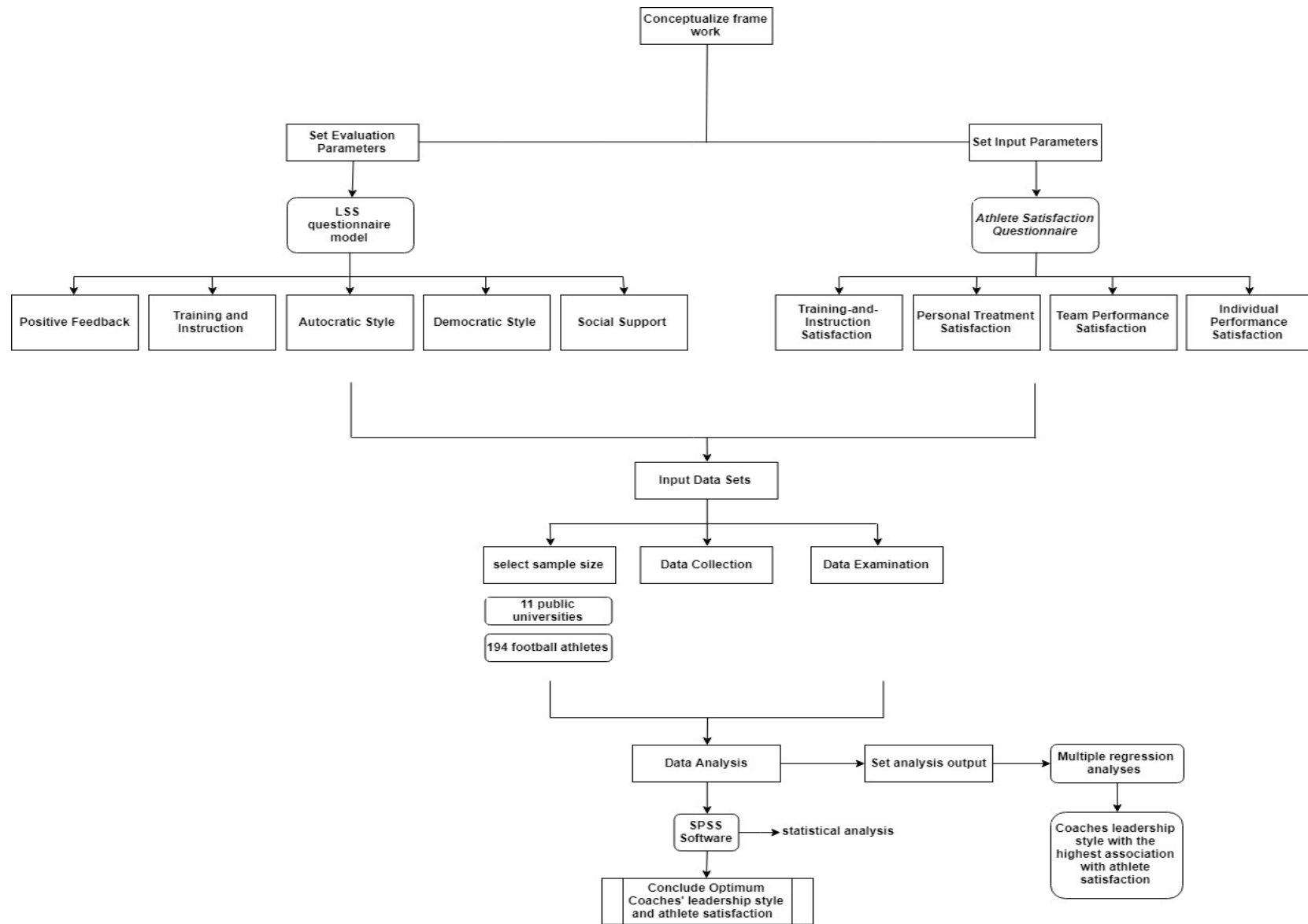


Figure 1. Research methodology

### 3.1. Participants of the Study

The participants in this study consisted of athletes belonging to 11 public universities in Iraq. They were male athletes selected from the squad lists of the football teams. The total sample included 194 athletes aged between 18 and 26 years, all of who were full-time students at the time of the study.

### 3.2. Data Collection

This study is of the quantitative type. According to Sekaran and Bougie [42], quantitative research usually uses a questionnaire collect data. Questionnaires are efficient tools for data collection when researchers know exactly what is needed in the study and how to measure the variables of interest [42]. In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used. With a self-administered questionnaire, the researcher or a member of the research team can collect the completed responses within a short period of time and clarify on the spot any doubts that respondents may have about a question. In addition, the questionnaire model is with the LSS and Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ) instruments, both of which were used in this study. The team's coaches do not also need to be present during data collection. A questionnaire was given to each participant (athlete) and they were given approximately 10-15 minutes to complete it. The completed copies from the athletes were collected by the research team.

### 3.3. Measurement

#### 3.3.1. Leadership Scale for Sport

One of the most popular scales for measuring the five elements of leadership style is the LSS, described by Chelladurai and Saleh [8]. The LSS instrument has been used in sports leadership research for more than 30 years. Its reliability and validity have also been re-evaluated several times.

The LSS is a questionnaire model consisting of 40 items divided into 5 subscales. These items are distributed on a subscale as follows: Training and Instruction (13 items), Autocratic Style (5 items), Democratic Style (9 items), Social Support (8 items) and Positive Feedback (5 items). The definitions for these five elements of leadership style were elaborated by Chelladurai [11].

The first element on training and instruction refers to the coach's style, which is focused on improving athletic performance. This aspect includes organising and coordinating activities and instructing athletes in their skills, tactics and techniques. The second element to the autocratic style refers to the authority and independent decision-making of the coaches. The third element, democratic style, allows athletes to participate in important coach decisions regarding group goals, strategies, game tactics and training methods. The fourth element, social

support, refers to the coach's concern for the athletes' welfare, building interpersonal relationships with the athletes and ensuring a generally positive environment. The fifth element of positive feedback refers to the way the coach encourages athletes by recognising and rewarding excellence [6].

Each item of the LSS instrument is preceded by phrases such as 'I prefer my coach...', 'When coaching...', 'My coach...' and 'The coach should...' which correspond to the preferred, actual, and required leadership styles. The responses at the five levels of the LSS can be interpreted as follows: 'always' corresponds to 100% of the time, 'often' corresponds to 75% of the time, 'occasionally' corresponds to 50% of the time and 'rarely' corresponds to 25% of the time [9].

#### 3.3.2. Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire

In sports research, athlete satisfaction can be assessed using the ASQ instrument, as reported by Riemer and Chelladurai [43]. The ASQ scale is considered easy to understand and answer. In addition, the ASQ provides a more comprehensive representation of the satisfaction domain that can map the different sides of the sporting experience [43].

The athlete satisfaction variable in this study was measured using 14 items from 4 dimensions of the ASQ (i.e. the full version contains 56 items with 15 dimensions) [43]. In addition, the items selected in this paper were assumed to be relevant to coaches' leadership styles based on previous research (see Khalaj, Khabiri [16]; and Riemer and Toon [44]). The previous studies focused on the following aspects: Satisfaction with training-and-instruction (3 items), Satisfaction with personal treatment (5 items), Satisfaction with team performance (3 items) and Satisfaction with individual performance (3 items). The first two subscales focus on satisfaction with outcomes related to coaching style processes, while the last two subscales assess satisfaction with outcomes related to leadership processes. The aforementioned items related to specific focus studies and therefore did not need to address all 15 aspects of athlete satisfaction (i.e. the remaining items of the ASQ scale were not related to the study concerns of the authors mentioned above). Accordingly, the present study also focused on only four aspects of the ASQ, specifically the parameters of sport satisfaction, which are closely related to the topic of this study.

The selected ASQ items were anchored on a 7-point Likert scale divided into seven levels, namely 1 (very dissatisfied), 2 (dissatisfied) 3 (slightly dissatisfied), 4 (neutral), 5 (slightly satisfied), 6 (satisfied) and 7 (very satisfied). A higher cumulative score therefore means greater satisfaction [45].

### 3.4. Reliability

An important factor considered in this study was the

reliability of the individual questions in the survey form. The more reliable the questions, the more accurate the results of the survey. Dwyer and Fischer [46] recommended a satisfactory value of at least 0.70 for the Cronbach's alpha (reliability measure), mainly because a high coefficient can ensure that the questions are very reliable. For the LLS, Cronbach's alpha can be used to estimate the internal consistency of the five leadership dimensions. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha has been used in numerous studies (see e.g. Kao, Chen [27]; Sari and Bayazit [11]) to determine the reliability of the LSS. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha values for the five subscales of the LSS were acceptable at 0.970 (training and guidance), 0.889 (autocratic style), 0.939 (democratic style), 0.943 (social support) and 0.905 (positive feedback).

For the ASQ, previous studies have also used Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of the instrument (see Paradis and Loughhead [47]; Khalaj, Khabiri [16]). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha values for the four subscales of the ASQ were acceptable at 0.766 (satisfaction with team performance), 0.916 (satisfaction with personal treatment), 0.925 (satisfaction with training-and-teaching) and 0.891 (satisfaction with individual performance).

### 3.5. Data Analysis

Various software programs are suitable for the above field of study, but researchers need to select the appropriate software. In general, one needs to consider the background of the model, the distributional characteristics of the data, the psychometric properties of the variables and the extent of the relationships between the above parameters for a given sample size [48]. The MML has largely focused on linking leadership dynamics to athlete satisfaction. Depending on MML model, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data represented by (LSS) and (ASQ). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software is widely used for statistical analysis, especially in education and research. Here, the data was processed using SPSS version (22). The collected data was analyzed inferentially using Pearson correlation to

determine the relationship between leadership styles and sports satisfaction. Linear regression modelling was also conducted in this study to examine the impact of coaches' leadership styles on athlete satisfaction. The significance level of was set at  $p < 0.01$ .

## 4. Results

Pearson's product-moment correlations were conducted to examine the presence of bivariate linear relationships and to determine the significant relationships between variables. The correlation results can illustrate how the variables are related in terms of strength and magnitude. In particular, Pearson's correlation coefficient  $r$  can be used to measure the extent of linear relationships. Pearson's  $r$  can take the values from  $-1$  to  $+1$  [49]. The general rule for interpreting the results (i.e. Pearson's  $r$ ) is as follows:  $0$  to  $\pm 0.20$  is negligible,  $\pm 0.21$  to  $\pm 0.35$  is weak,  $\pm 0.36$  to  $\pm 0.67$  is moderate,  $\pm 0.68$  to  $\pm 0.90$  is strong and  $\pm 0.91$  to  $\pm 1.00$  is very strong [50]. In this study, Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between coaches' leadership style (independent variables) and athletes' satisfaction (dependent variables).

Table 1 shows the correlation between the leadership styles of football coaches in terms of training and instruction, autocratic style, democratic style, social support and positive feedback. The analysis focused on deriving the relationships between football coaches' leadership style and athletes' satisfaction in terms of team performance satisfaction, personal treatment satisfaction, training-and-instruction satisfaction and individual performance satisfaction.

The results of the Pearson correlation indicate that the training and instruction style of coaches is moderately and positively correlated with team performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.538^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), personal treatment satisfaction ( $r = 0.402^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), training and instruction satisfaction ( $r = 0.650^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and individual performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.517^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the coaches' use of the training and instruction style can lead to athletes' satisfaction, which subsequently improves the athletes' performance.

**Table 1.** Correlation between leadership style of coaches and athletes' satisfaction

<i>Leadership style</i> <i>Athletes' satisfaction</i>	<i>Training and instruction</i>	<i>Autocratic style</i>	<i>Democratic Style</i>	<i>Social Support</i>	<i>Positive Feedback</i>	<i>Leadership styles</i>
<i>Team performance</i>	0.538*	0.382*	0.406*	0.558*	0.435*	0.563*
<i>Personal treatment</i>	0.402*	0.185*	0.482*	0.366*	0.361*	0.431*
<i>Training and instruction</i>	0.650*	0.209*	0.577*	0.616*	0.649*	0.655*
<i>Individual performance</i>	0.517*	0.286*	0.513*	0.595*	0.469*	0.576*
<i>Athletes' satisfaction</i>	0.742*	0.357*	0.693*	0.750*	0.684*	0.781*

\*Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

The results of the Pearson correlation indicate that the autocratic style of coaches is moderately and positively correlated with team performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.382^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), personal treatment satisfaction ( $r = 0.185$ ,  $p < 0.010$ ), training and instruction satisfaction ( $r = 0.209$ ,  $p < 0.003$ ) and individual performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.286^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the coaches' use of the autocratic style leads to low satisfaction, because the coach adopts his authority intake decision-making.

The results of the Pearson correlation indicate that the democratic style of coaches is moderately and positively correlated with team performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.406^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), personal treatment satisfaction ( $r = 0.482^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), training and instruction satisfaction ( $r = 0.577^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and individual performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.513^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the coaches' use of the democratic style can lead to athletes' satisfaction, through Participation in the decision-making.

The results of the Pearson correlation indicate that the social support style of coaches is moderately and positively correlated with team performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.558^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), personal treatment satisfaction ( $r = 0.366^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), training and instruction satisfaction ( $r = 0.616^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and individual performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.565^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the coaches' use of the social support style can lead to athletes' satisfaction, through the creation of a joyful environment for the athletes.

The results of the Pearson correlation indicate that the positive feedback style of coaches is moderately and positively correlated with team performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.435^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), personal treatment satisfaction ( $r = 0.361^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), training and instruction satisfaction ( $r$

$= 0.649^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and individual performance satisfaction ( $r = 0.469^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the coaches' use of the positive feedback style can lead to athletes' satisfaction, by providing feedback to the athletes; to improve the team performance.

The results of the Pearson correlation indicate that the social support style of coaches is strongly and positively correlated with athletes' satisfaction ( $r = 0.750^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by training and instruction style ( $r = 0.742^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), democratic style ( $r = 0.693^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), positive feedback style ( $r = 0.684$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and autocratic style ( $r = 0.357^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Generally, there is a strong positive relationship between leadership styles of coaches and athletes' satisfaction ( $r = 0.781^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 2 shows the modelling results of the multiple regression, particularly the extent of significant effects of the leadership styles of football coaches (i.e. the subscales of training and instruction, autocratic style, democratic style, social support and positive feedback) on the satisfaction of athletes.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the effect of coaches' leadership styles on athletes' satisfaction, particularly among Iraqi football teams. As shown in Table 2, only the satisfaction scores of coaches' autocratic style did not contribute to the multiple regression model ( $p > .05$ ). By contrast, the most effective variable among the five subscales was training and instruction ( $\beta = 0.271$ ), and then followed by social support ( $\beta = 0.238$ ), democratic style ( $\beta = 0.217$ ) and positive feedback style ( $\beta = 0.205$ ). These four styles can explain 64% of the total variance in the satisfaction scores ( $R^2 = 0.653$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.644$ ,  $F = 70.727$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 2.** Results of multiple-regression model analyses concerning of coach leadership styles and athletes' satisfaction

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
<i>Training and instruction</i>	0.164	0.048	0.271	3.416	0.001
<i>Autocratic style</i>	-0.032	0.032	-0.050	-0.981	0.328
<i>Democratic style</i>	0.153	0.050	0.217	3.069	0.002
<i>Social support</i>	0.139	0.051	0.238	2.734	0.007
<i>Positive feedback</i>	0.126	0.040	0.205	3.136	0.002
$R^2 = 0.653$ , Adjusted $R^2 = 0.644$ , $F = 70.727$ , $p < 0.001$					

\*Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

## 5. Conclusions

The widening importance of coach leadership in various sports organisations coupled with the emergence of well-structured teams has legitimised the examination of the effectiveness of coaching leadership towards athletic satisfaction. Noteworthy endeavours have also been rendered to comprehend the leadership styles of coaches, which is one of the most complex elements of sports psychology and communication, particularly in achieving organisational goals [6]. In this work, the study was systematically conducted to identify the correlation and the particular influence of coaches' leadership styles, as depicted by the LSS instrument [8], on athletes' satisfaction. Meanwhile, the term 'athletes' satisfaction' has been widely investigated as a psychological factor in theoretical studies, and this parametric construct is often analysed in the context of coaching leadership styles [23]. The outcomes obtained by this study have shown correlations between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' satisfaction, a finding that is consistent with those in past research that examined coaching leadership effectiveness in sports. However, the results of this study have also contrasted some past assumptions with regard to coaching leadership style and athletic satisfaction.

The findings of this study prove the positive relationships between coaches' leadership style (social support, training and instruction, democratic style, positive feedback and autocratic style) and athletes' satisfaction (team performance, personal treatment, training and instruction and individual performance). Among the variables, the training-and-instruction style of coaches and the satisfaction of athletes towards training and instruction obtained the highest association.

The findings of this study, which established the relationship between the leadership style subscale and the athletic satisfaction subscale, conform with those in the research of Andrew [51] and Ismail et al. [23], which presented a positive relationship between leadership styles and athletic satisfaction. However, the current findings contrasted with those of Khalaj, Khabiri [16]. The reasons for the unconformity (e.g. dissatisfaction of athletes) may be explained by the differences in the utilised statistical specifications for society, sex, circumstance, culture and variables of interest (i.e. the present study focused on sports).

There are relationships between all leadership style subscales and athlete satisfaction at varying levels. Moreover, the coaching styles cannot be viewed separately. Sometimes a coach uses more than one style and combines between them during training time to enhance athletes' confidence. Among the different coaching leadership styles, moderate to strong positive correlations have existed for the variables of social support, training and instruction, democratic style, positive feedback, and autocratic style as social support contributed the highest

association. Also, the results of statistical analysis further suggest that when Iraqi coaches want to establish good relationships with their athletes, they can use the social support style to motivate players during coaching and subsequently enhance the coach-athlete relationship. Interestingly, the relationship between the autocratic style of coaching and athletic satisfaction yielded a positive significant result. This finding implies that coaches who exemplify personal authority and make independent decisions can promote satisfaction among athletes.

Chiu, Rodriguez [52] argued that a generally positive relationship exists between the leadership scales and the athletic satisfaction items. The results of this study conform with the findings of Chiu, Rodriguez [52]. Din, Rashid [31] also reported meaningful relationships between leadership and satisfaction. However, the finding of this study did not conform with the findings of Shapie, Zenal [53].

The results have proven the direct positive effects of coaches' training and instruction (i.e. the item with the highest association), social support, democratic style and positive feedback on athletes' satisfaction, but a negative effect was obtained for coaches' autocratic style of leadership. These results suggest that if coaches want to enhance their athletes' satisfaction levels, they should focus on the development of athletic performance by ensuring proper and systematic skills training and by providing relevant techniques. Skills measurement and evaluation should also be regularly conducted to determine the performance progress of athletes.

In this study, whilst the coaches' training-and-instruction style consistently influenced athletes' satisfaction (i.e. an outcome similar to those of previous studies, including Kim and Cruz [6]), mixed results were found for the other leadership scales (i.e. see Chia, Pyun [22] and Farneti and Turner [54]). Nonetheless, the training-and-instruction style in this study obtained the highest impact between predictor and outcome variables. The seemingly contrasting result mentioned above simply means that, in diverse training circumstances, coaches need to conduct active engagement and interpersonal communication to help their teams to become highly satisfied [6]. The combined analytic findings of this study presume that training under the guidance of coaches can help athletes acquire the skills needed to become proficient football players. In general, coaches must possess the ability to balance different styles of leadership, but the greater emphasis should be on the training-and-instruction and social support styles to improve team satisfaction. Therefore, coaches should continuously educate themselves and need to become informed with innovative skills and techniques to promote team satisfaction and performance. Consequently, this approach will aid in improving athletic performance and give coaches the time to learn their team member's strengths and weaknesses within and outside the training environment.



Among the five leadership styles, only the autocratic style had a negative effect on athletic satisfaction. The result of the present study supports the findings of Bum and Shin [55] on the South Korea National Middle and High School Golf Championship, in which the coaches' authoritative leadership style decreased the athletes' performance levels. Therefore, unlike previous views, a leadership style with autocratic or authoritarian orientations is currently considered ineffective by football players, as this approach generally leads to the deterioration of athletic performance.

Consequently, the findings of this study are meaningful because they demonstrate the close connection between coaches' leadership styles and athletes' satisfaction and performance. This study may serve to cultivate highly competent coaches who do not limit their coaching to teaching the technical aspects of a sport and instead expand their approaches to incorporate the psychological aspects of coaching, mainly because of its importance to teams. Moreover, the athletes' well-being and performance are highly affected by the effectiveness of their coaches' leadership styles, which is considered a significant factor in this domain. Thus, this study may provide sports administrators of Iraqi football teams with an understanding of how coaches' leadership styles influence their players to become successful on and off the sports field. The subject of this study and other studies presented in sport management field serve as a basis for local and global future studies in the same field.

## 6. Limitations to Address for Future Study

The study specified the leadership styles of coaches and the satisfaction of athletes belonging to Iraqi university-based football teams. Future studies can investigate the specific contexts of sports teams at the club and national levels by considering different sports games or by making comparative studies between collective games (basketball, football, volleyball and handball) and individual games (golf, tennis, swimming and track and field). This study can also be expanded to test other relationships (i.e. between players and other members of the sports organisation, such as assistant coaches or medical staff), as they play equally important roles in coach-athlete dynamics. Furthermore, as opposed to coaches in Western countries with different responsibilities and obligations as mandated by their respective athletic departments, the coaches investigated in the present study have different sets of responsibilities. Future research may attempt to raise the generalizability of the present study by expanding its scope to cover the sports situation in other countries. With such expansion, cultural comparisons may be successfully rendered.

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