

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR PATTERN AMONG MALE AND FEMALE GYMNASTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of study was to examine and compare the leadership behavior of male and female gymnasts. Seventy nine (Males=43, Females=36) national school level elite male and female gymnasts representing their respective state school teams in National School Games, 2009-10 and who volunteered to participate in this study, were randomly selected to serve as subjects for this study. Their age ranged from 17 to 19 years. The Leadership Scale for Sports developed and prepared in 1994 by Chelladurai was used to measure the five dimensions of leader behaviour as preferred and perceived by male and female involved in Artistic Gymnastics. Means, standard deviations and t-ratio were computed to establish the significance of differences between National School level elite male and female Gymnasts regarding the five dimensions leader behaviour of preferred and perceived leadership. The level of significant was set at $p < 0.05$ level. The data analysis revealed that male and female gymnasts did not differ significantly in all the dimensions of preferred leader behavior except positive feed back dimension and . TI, AB and SS dimensions of perceived leader behaviour. Male gymnasts preferred a greater degree of preferences and perceptions for coaching behavior from their coaches than their counter parts. The discrepancy was not observed between preferred and perceived leader behaviour of male and female gymnasts from their coaches on five leader behaviour dimensions. Further, both sex gymnasts preferred and perceived more of training and instruction and least autocratic leader behaviour from their coaches.

Key words: Preference, Perception, Coach leadership, Elite gymnasts

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main goals in sports is to create a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction among fellow athletes. In order to accomplish this, one must understand that there are several dynamics that come into play that influence the athletes' way of thinking when it comes to success and their experiences in sports. The importance of the coach in determining the quality and success of an athlete's sport experience, surprisingly, has seen little research that identifies optimal coaching behavior and factors that influence the effectiveness of particular behavior.

Leader ability, relative to the ability of members, influences actual behavior. Leader ability consists of group-task and process knowledge, problem solving capacity, and interpersonal skills. Leader experience influences actual behavior through confidence and self-esteem development in the leader and athlete, perhaps making less preferred behaviors more acceptable for the athlete. Vast technique and tactical knowledge held by the coach and shared among athletes may result in athletes' acceptance of autocratic leader behaviors. Situational characteristics and members' preferred behaviors also influence actual leader behavior include various individual, team, and entire organization rules, regulations, and goals [2].

An individual's perception of another's behavior is more important than the behavior itself in determining one's feelings or actions toward the other person has suggested by Shaver [15]

Multidimensional model of leadership focuses upon three states of leader behavior. Actual coaching behavior describes what is done or can be done to influence athletes. Required behavior describes behavior prescribed by the situation. Preferred behavior describes the type of behavior student-athletes would like from their coaches [3].

Preferred leader behavior describes the type of behavior athletes would like from their coaches. The preferred behavior influences actual leader behavior, perhaps as a result of situational requirements such as organizational rules, regulations, and goals and influenced by member characteristics of personality, ability, attitude toward authority, attitude towards individualism, self-esteem, and need for independence [4] .

Erle [10] revealed that male athletes gave higher ratings to training and instruction leader behaviors. Terry [16] found that male elite athletes had a significantly stronger preference for autocratic leader behavior than did their female peers. He also found that males to prefer more autocratic behavior, but not less democratic behavior, than females in a sample of competitive elite athletes. Conclusions Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions were reached: Chelladurai & Saleh [5] found a significant relationship between longer tenure in sport and university and elite athletes' preferences for social support leader behaviors. Chelladurai and Carron [6] revealed a significant relationship between longer tenure in sport and preferences for social support leader behaviors. They also found a significant relationship between longer tenure and university individual and team sport student-athletes' preferences for training and instruction leader behaviors. Cheng [9] studied 800 athletes from colleges, junior high schools, and senior high schools, finding that male athletes have a higher preference for autocratic behavior than do female athletes. Chang [7] indicated that athletes' preferred significant autocratic behavior proved effective in athletes;

thus, the means of males are higher than females in social support, positive feedback, training and instruction, democratic behavior.

Wu, Pender and Noureddine [17] further found that the girls' deficiencies created greater barriers than their male complements, indicating lower benefits and self-efficacy for physical activity. However, these girls reported higher levels of social support, modeling and norms from their parents

The athlete represents an equally important member of the sport leadership dyad, but has largely been ignored in the research. This is unfortunate because investigations determining athlete preferences for and perceptions of coaching behavior may lead to uncovering important leadership variables in sport. The types of leadership behavior styles athletes prefer from their coach and whether differences in these preferences exist between athletes engaged in team versus individual sports, male versus female athletes, participating at different competition levels appear appropriate areas of investigations.

This study examined the preferred and perceived leadership behavior of National level elite male and female gymnasts of India. The study also examined the congruence's between preferences and perception of both gender. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore (a) hypothesis stating that there will be no significance difference between genders in the preferred and perceived leadership behavior of their coaches, and (b) hypothesis stating that there will no significance difference between gender in their preferences and perceptions from their coaches.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Samples

Seventy nine (Males=43, Females=36)) national school level elite male and female gymnasts representing their respective state school teams in National School Games (Gymnastics) Championships, 2009 and who volunteered to participate in this study, were selected to serve as subjects for this study. The subjects were in age group of 17 to 19 years. The subjects were randomly selected from amongst the total male and female gymnasts, who have qualified for the apparatus event final, team event final and all around event final during the National School Games (gymnastics) championships, 2009. held at Sports Stadium, Agra (U.P.) and organized by State Education Department of Uttar Pradesh.

Instrumentation

Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) by Chelladurai [8], has five-factor solutions with 40 items describing the most salient dimensions of coaching behavior, selected as the most meaningful. The LSS consists of two decision-style factors (Democratic--9 items and Autocratic Behavior--5 items) with a total of 14 items, two motivational factors (Social Support--8 items and Positive Feedback--5 items) with a total of 13 items, and one direct task factor (Training & Instruction) with 13 items. Although there are three versions of the original questionnaire (i.e. athlete preference and athlete perception and coach's perception), the athlete preference version and athlete perception version were used in the current study. The items have a five-point Likert response-format ranging from "never" (1) to "always" (5). The scoring of each item is as follows: 1= Never; 2= Seldom; 3= Occasionally; 4= Often; 5= Always. In the present study, scoring was reversed, as the data were considered more easily interpreted with a score of 5 as "high" and a score of 1 as "low".

This research study was conducted during the National Schools Game, 2009-2010 in Agra (U.P.) from November 28 to December 2, 2009. The author gave the survey instruments to the coaches, who distributed them to the gymnastic team members. Gymnasts were asked to fill out the survey questionnaire (LSS) before the games started or after they finished.

Statistical Analysis

To assess the preferred and perceived leadership behaviour of National School level elite male and female Gymnasts, means and standard deviations were computed. The t-ratio was computed to find out the significant difference between National School level elite male and female Gymnasts on five dimensions of preferred and perceived leader behaviour. The data pertaining to this are presented in Table 1 to 4.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics of preferences and perceptions on five dimensions of leader behaviour of national level elite male and female gymnasts is shown in Table 1. The mean scores of five dimensions of leader behaviour as preferred and perceived by elite male and female gymnasts of National School level are shown in figures 1 to 2.

TABELE 1

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PREFERENCES AND PERCEPTION ON FIVE DIMENSIONS OF LEADER BEHAVIOUR OF ELITE MALE AND FEMALE GYMNASTS OF NATIONAL SCHOOL LEVEL

S. N0.	Leader Behaviour Dimensions	Preferences				Perceptions			
		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		M	± SD	M	± SD	M	± SD	M	± SD
1	Training & Instruction (TI)	4.124	± 0.521	3.973	± 0.563	4.071	± 0.524	4.036	± 0.369
2	Democratic Behaviour (DB)	3.901	± 0.594	3.694	± 0.594	3.819	± 0.549	3.431	± 0.633
3	Autocratic Behaviour (AB)	3.394	± 0.894	3.274	± 0.542	3.414	± 0.732	3.314	± 0.664
4	Social Support (SS)	3.773	± 0.601	3.696	± 0.541	3.771	± 0.521	3.691	± 0.566
5	Positive Feedback (PF)	3.983	± 0.752	3.680	± 0.488	3.963	± 0.574	3.508	± 0.573

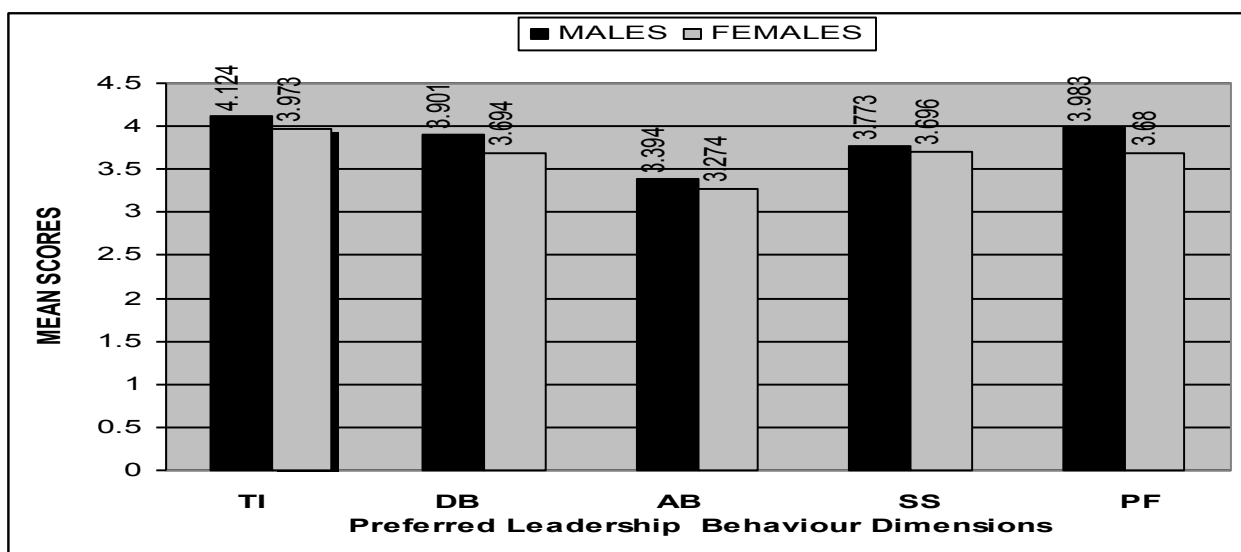


Fig. 1 : Mean Scores of Five Dimensions of Leader Behaviour as Preferred by Elite Male and Female National level School Gymnasts of India.

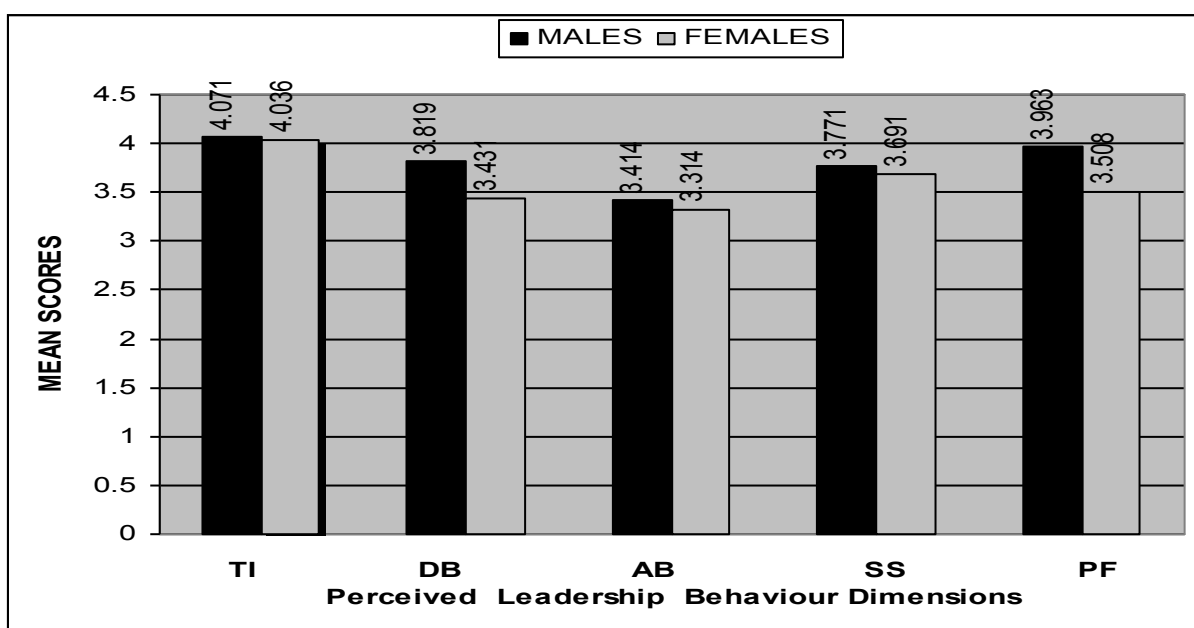


Fig. 2 : Mean Scores of Five Dimensions of Leader Behaviour as Perceived by Elite Male and Female National level School Gymnasts of India

For the purpose of the comparison between elite male and female gymnasts, t-ratio with independent factors with five dimensions of preferred leader behaviour was applied as a set of dependent variables. The data pertaining to this are presented in Table 2

TABELE 2

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEAN SCORES OF NATIONAL SCHOOL LEVEL ELITE MALE AND FEMALE GYMNASTS ON LEADER BEHAVIOUR DIMENSIONS OF PREFERRED LEADERSHIP

Leader Behaviour Dimensions	Sex	Mean	MD	σ DM	t-ratio
Training & Instruction (TI)	Male	4.124	0.151	0.123	1.23
	Female	3.973			
Democratic Behaviour (DB)	Male	3.901	0.207	0.135	1.53
	Female	3.694			
Autocratic Behaviour (AB)	Male	3.394	0.120	0.189	0.63
	Female	3.274			
Social Support (SS)	Male	3.773	0.077	0.131	0.59
	Female	3.696			
Positive Feedback (PF)	Male	3.983.	0.303	0.147	2.05*
	Female	3.680			

*Significant at .05 level, $t_{.05}(76) = 1.99$

As can be seen from Table 2, that the significant difference was observed between the preferences of national school level elite male and female gymnasts on positive feedback dimension of preferred leadership only. But, they did not differ significantly on rest of the dimensions of preferred leadership i.e. TI, DB, AB and SS.

For the purpose of the comparison between elite male and female gymnasts, t-ratio with independent factors with five dimensions of perceived leader behaviour was applied as a set of dependent variables. The data pertaining to this are presented in Table 3

TABELE 3

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEAN SCORES OF NATIONAL
SCHOOL LEVEL ELITE MALE AND FEMALE GYMNASTS ON LEADER
BEHAVIOUR DIMENSIONS OF PERCIEVED LEADERSHIP

Leader Behaviour Dimensions	Sex	Mean	MD	σ DM	t-ratio
Training & Instruction (TI)	Male	4.071	0.035	0.105	0.33
	Female	4.036			
Democratic Behaviour (DB)	Male	3.819	0.388	0.133	2.89*
	Female	3.431			
Autocratic Behaviour (AB)	Male	3.414	0.100	0.158	0.63
	Female	3.314			
Social Support (SS)	Male	3.771	0.080	0.123	0.65
	Female	3.691			
Positive Feedback (PF)	Male	3.963	0.455	0.131	3.48*
	Female	3.508			

*Significant at .05 level
t.05 (76) = 1.99

As can be seen from Table 3, that significant difference was found between the perceptions of national school level elite male and female gymnasts on democratic behaviour and positive feedback dimensions of perceived leadership. But, But, they did not differ significantly on rest of the dimensions of perceived leadership i.e. TI, AB and SS.

To observed the discrepancy between perceived (actual) and preferred leader behaviour of national level elite male and female gymnasts from their coaches t-ratio with independent factors with five dimensions of perceived and preferred leader behaviour was applied as a set of dependent variables. The data pertaining to this are presented in Table 4

TABELE 4
SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEAN SCORES OF NATIONAL SCHOOL
LEVEL ELITE MALE AND FEMALE GYMNASTS ON LEADER BEHAVIOUR
DIMENSIONS OF PREFERRED AND PERCIEVED LEADERSHIP

Leader Behaviour Dimensions	Sex	Mean		MD	σ DM	t-ratio
		Preference	Perception			
Training & Instruction (TI)	Male	4.124	4.071	0.053	0.113	0.47
	Female	3.973	4.036	0.063	0.114	0.56
Democratic Behaviour (DB)	Male	3.901	3.819	0.082	0.123	0.67
	Female	3.694	3.431	0.263	0.147	1.79
Autocratic Behaviour (AB)	Male	3.394	3.414	0.020	0.176	0.11
	Female	3.274	3.314	0.040	0.167	0.24
Social Support (SS)	Male	3.773	3.771	0.002	0.121	0.02
	Female	3.696	3.691	0.005	0.132	0.04
Positive Feedback (PF)	Male	3.983	3.963	0.020	0.144	0.13
	Female	3.680	3.508	0.171	0.127	1.35

Non-significant at .05 level, $t_{.05}(84) = 1.99$ (Male), $t_{.05}(68) = 2.00$ (Female).

It is evident from table 4, that the national school level elite male and female gymnasts did not differ significantly in their preferences and perceptions for the set of five dimensions of leader behaviour.

DISCUSSION

Researchers have found similar leadership preferences between national level elite male and female Gymnasts. This may be due to similar cultural background, sports ideologies and competitive environment. But they were differing only in positive feedback dimension of preferred leaders behaviour. It indicates that the positive feedback is contingent and limited to athletic context. In case of perceptions, they were also similar in three dimension of perceived leadership behaviour, but differ in democratic behaviour and positive feedback leader behaviour. The national level elite male gymnasts preferred and perceived more training and instruction, democratic and autocratic behaviour, social support and positive feedback. than their counter parts. This was partially supported by other researchers Terry [16].

When the school national level elite male and female gymnasts were compared on preferred and perceived leadership, It revealed that significant differences in preferences and perceptions based on gender were not found. It clearly revealed that they were satisfied with the actual and expected behaviour of coaches, which confides with the other research by Terry and Howe [12], Beam [1] & Sharma [14]. The findings were attributed to a proposed shrinking gender gap that may have resulted due to increased participation opportunities for females in sports as expressed by Lopiano [11]. Further, it indicates that no discrepancy was observed between perceived (actual) and preferred behaviour of national level elite male and female gymnasts from their coaches.

The preferences and perceptions expressed by the gymnasts are not in congruence with

above cited studies. It seems that national level elite male and female gymnasts included in the study are more serious about their performance and are more goal- oriented. The coaches of these should aim at improving the athlete's performance by emphasizing and facilitating hard and strenuous training, instructing the athletes in skills, techniques and tactics of sport. They should recognize the decision making style and reward to their good performance. This contrasting result may be attributed to the fact that these gymnasts might not have been trained seriously and regularly by a qualified coach. Indian culture and sporting environment may also be one of the possible reasons for these leadership preferences and perceptions. Riemer and Toon [13] suggest that situation differences between sports might determine saliency of leadership behaviour and leadership would be divergent among nations.

CONCLUSIONS

Within the limitation of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Significant difference was found between the elite male and female gymnasts in their positive feedback dimension of preferred leader behaviour. Elite male gymnasts preferred a greater degree of preferences for coaching behaviors from their coaches than their counter parts.
2. There were significant mean differences between elite male and female gymnast's perceptions in Democratic behaviour and positive feedback. Elite male gymnasts perceived a greater degree of perceptions for coaching behaviors from their coaches than their counter parts.
3. There were no significant mean differences between elite male and female gymnasts in their TI, AB and SS perceived leadership behaviour.
4. There was no discrepancy between preferred and perceived leader behaviour of elite male and female gymnasts from their coaches on five leader behaviour dimensions.
5. There were significant mean differences among elite male and female gymnasts of national school level in their preferences and perceptions on five leader behaviour dimensions
6. Male and female gymnasts preferred and perceived more of training and instruction and least autocratic leader behaviour from their coaches.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Coaches should try to eliminate the difference between real leadership and athlete's expectation. Moreover, they should adjust the real needs according to athlete's background and real situation. Coaches should give athletes more autocratic training schedule.

Because of lack of research evidence in regard to sports specific leadership in Indian sports scenario there is ample scope for researchers to address number of potentially important areas

SUGGESTION FOR THE FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research on sports leadership should address the factors that affect performance such as age, training age/ experience, level of participation, ability, gender etc. along with characteristics of the coach because coach has greatest influence on the player's performance

The research is mainly focus on domestic athletes, so the further research can consider about comparing with international athletes of schools.

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