

Goal Orientation and preferred coaching styles of Malaysian Sport School's athletes

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The objective of this study was to identify goal orientation and preferred coaching styles of the young athletes from Malaysian Sports Schools, based on gender differences, age, and type of sport participated. Instruments used in this study were Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ) and the athlete's preferred version of the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS). Subject were young athletes from Malaysian Sport School age 13 to 18 years old ($N = 854$). Descriptive analysis indicated that athletes were more inclined toward Task orientation rather than Ego. Result of *t*-test revealed significant differences for goal orientation based on gender and age. ANOVA analysis also showed that there are significant differences of goal orientation based on types of sports. Boys were found to be high in both Task and Ego orientation than girls. Younger athletes are more task-oriented as compared to senior athletes. Individual sport athletes were found to be more Ego oriented than team sport athletes. The most preferred coaching styles were Training and Instruction, followed by Democratic, Social Support, and Positive Feedback. Autocratic behaviour was the least preferred coaching style. The results also indicated that there was a significant different in coaching style based on gender and age group. Male athletes preferred more Autocratic and Positive Feedback as compared to female athletes. Senior athletes preferred Training and Instruction and Social Support, while the younger athletes preferred Autocratic coaching style. In conclusion, the results indicates that the authorities involved in the development and planning of the sport programme should know and understand the athletes' goal orientation and their preferred coaching styles to achieve success.

Keywords: Goal orientation, Preferred Coaching Styles, Young Athletes, Malaysian Sports School

1.0 Introduction

Youth are the most important component in the society and young athletes are key to the future of a national sports [1-2]. Malaysian government's eagerness to improve the quality of sports was evidenced by the establishment five Malaysia Sports Schools and 15 State Sports Schools. Malaysian Sports School's mission is to produce world class athletes [3]. In order to produce high performance athletes, this young athletes have to go through a proper development sports programme and training. According to [2,4] youth have special coaching needs, much different from the needs of adults and the most important aspects in training young athletes is to provide them with optimum sporting environments. Sport psychologist suggest that in order to ensure youth involvement in sports, we must be able to understand their psychological aspect such as goal orientation [1-2, 5-6] and coaching styles they preferred [2,7,8].

Identifying athletes' goal orientation gives a clearer picture of the level of involvement in sports. According to [1] goal orientation is related to how the individual defines success. Task oriented individual are more focused on mastering the skills while an ego oriented individual defines success by beating others. Research has shown that a high task orientation correlates with several positive aspects in sport, such as longer adherence to the sport, greater mastery of skills, better performance, strong work ethics, greater control, less anxiety, greater enjoyment and functional coping strategies. Conversely a high ego orientation is related to maladaptive behaviours, dropping out, lowered self-esteem when losing, attributing failure to low ability, challenge avoidance, learned helplessness, self-handicapping and cheating [2, 9-13]. Earlier studies have found differences in goal orientations between groups, gender and age [14-15]. However, an in-depth study is needed to see if athletes of Malaysia Sports Schools differ in their goal orientation based on gender, age and type of sport they involved. This knowledge is important for coaches to understand their athletes and play an important role in facilitating motivation.

Motivating youth to play begins with the coach. Coaches are important in mentoring athletes and act as a leader to develop a strong sport team [16]. According to Chelladurai's Multidimensional Model, sport performance and satisfaction of the athletes depends on the congruence among required, current, and preferred coach leadership style [17] which comprise the Democratic, Autocratic, Training and Instruction, Social Support, and Positive Feedback approach [18].

Research has revealed that coaches perceived as more inclined toward Training and Instructions, Social Support, and Positive Feedback resulted in higher levels of athletes' sport participation, self-determined motivation, fun, group cohesion, and lower levels of anxiety and burnout (19-21). On the other hand, coach Autocratic behaviour was negatively related to the relationship between coaches and athletes [22 -23]. It is important to identify what leadership styles most preferred so coaches have the ability to adapt how they lead their team. Literature provided evidence that athletes from different gender, type of sport, and level of competition preferred different type of coach leadership [21, 23-24, 27]. Understanding the preferred leadership styles of Malaysian Sports School athlete's is important because it enables coaches to more effectively motivate their athletes to improve performance and increase their satisfaction in the sport.

As such, the purposes of this study were to identify goal orientation and preferred coaching styles among young athletes in Malaysian Sports Schools, and to examine goal orientation and preferred coaching styles among Malaysian Sports Schools athletes based on gender differences, age, and type of sport participated.

2. Research Methods

The study utilised a quantitative survey approached by using two types of questionnaires; the goal orientation (TEOSQ) [28] and translated to Bahasa Melayu by [29] and *Leadership Scale for Sport* (LSS) by [30], translated by [31]. TEOSQ contains 13 items which describe the goal orientation involvement of individuals in sports. Reliability of

the Malay translated version of TEOSQ was $r = 0.80$ for task orientation and $r = 0.76$ for the ego orientation [29]. LSS contains 40 items that examine five dimension of coaches' coaching styles which are Training and Instruction, Democratic, Autocratic, Social Support and Positive Feedback. The Malay translated version of LSS was reliable and valid to be use among youth ($r = 0.81$ for Training & Instruction; $r = 0.76$ for Democratic Behaviour; $r = 0.72$ for Autocratic Behaviour, $r = 0.74$ for Social Support and $r = 0.70$ for Positive Feedback).

Subjects in this study were the population of two Malaysian Sport Schools athletes ($N = 854$; Bukit Jalil Sports School = 409, Bandar Penawar Sports School = 445). Descriptive statistics were used to measure the mean and standard deviation of goal orientation and preferred coaching styles of the Malaysian Sports Schools athletes. *T*-test and ANOVA was used to identify the differences in goal orientation and leadership styles based on gender, age group and type of sport participated. A significant value was set at $p < 0.05$

3. Results and Discussions

A summary of goal orientation scores are presented in Table 1. Results showed that Malaysian Sports School athletes were more inclined toward Task orientation ($\underline{M} = 4.33 \pm 0.57$) rather than Ego ($\underline{M} = 3.40 \pm 0.78$).

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of goal orientation

Goal Orientation	<u>M</u>	SD
Task	4.33	0.57
Ego	3.40	0.78

T-test analysis showed that there were significant differences in goal orientation between male and female athletes. Male athletes were more task-oriented $t(852) = 3.13$, $p < 0.05$ and ego oriented $t(852) = 3.19$, $p < 0.05$ than female athletes (see Table 2).

Table 2: Differences in goal orientation based on gender (*t*-test)

Goal Orentation	Gender	M	SD	<i>t</i> -value	df	Sig
Task	Male	4.38	0.57	3.13	852	0.002

Ego	Female	4.35	0.57	3.19	852	0.001
	Male	3.46	0.78			
	Female	3.28	0.75			

Significant level $p < 0.05$

Table 3 displays the result of one-way ANOVA to analyze the differences in goal orientation by age. Results showed that there are significant differences in task orientation $F(2, 851) = 4055, p < 0.05$ based on age. For ego orientation, one-way ANOVA analysis revealed that there was no significant difference $F(2, 851) = 0.717, p > 0.05$. (see Table 3). Based on post hoc test, younger athletes (under 15 years) are more task-oriented compared to senior athletes (under 18 years) (see Table 4).

Table 3: Differences in goal orientation based on age group (one way-ANOVA)

Goal orientation		Sum square	df	F	Sig.
Task	Between group	2.621	2	4.055	0.018**
	Within group	275.061	851		
	Total	277.683	853		
Ego	Between group	0.868	2	0.717	0.489
	Within group	515.639	851		
	Total	516.506	853		

*Significant level $P < 0.05$

Table 4: Differences in goal orientation based on age group (post hoc test)

Goal Orientation	(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	(I - J) MeanDiff	Sig
Task	Under-15	Under-18	0.109*	0.023
		Under-21	-0.016	0.969
	Under-18	Under-15	-0.109*	0.023
		Under-21	-0.125	0.158
	Under-21	Under-15	0.016	0.969
		Under-18	0.125	0.158

*Significant level $p < 0.05$

Independent t-test was used to identify differences in goal orientation based on type of sport (team / individual). In Table 5, result indicated that there was a significant difference for Ego orientation between team and individual sport athletes $t(852) = -2.67, p < 0.05$. Individual sport athletes ($M = 3.48 \pm 0.76$) were higher in ego orientation than team sport athletes ($M = 3.33 \pm 0.79$). For task orientation, the t-test results showed no

significant mean difference in task orientation between team and individual sport athletes
 $t(852) = 0.76, p > 0.05$.

Table 5: Mean difference in goal orientation based on type of sport (t-test)

Goal Orientation	Type of Sport	M	SD	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tail)
Task	Team	4.35	0.59	0.76	852	0.445
	Individual	4.32	0.54			
Ego	Team	3.33	0.79	-2.67	852	0.008
	Individual	3.48	0.76			

*Significant level $p < 0.05$

Descriptive analyses on preferred leadership style by Malaysian Sport School athletes revealed that Training and Instruction ($M = 4.09, SD = 0.73$) was the most preferred leadership style by the athletes, followed by Democratic ($M = 3.87, SD = 0.75$); Social Support ($M = 3.74, SD = 0.75$) and Positive Feedback ($M = 3.59, SD = 0.82$). Autocratic behavior was the least preferred coaching style ($M = 2.35, SD = 0.96$) (see Table 6)

Table 6: Descriptive analysis preferred coaching styles

Preferred coaching styles	M	SD
Training and Instruction	4.09	0.73
Democratic	3.87	0.75
Social Support	3.74	0.75
Positive Feedback	3.59	0.82
Autocratic	2.35	0.96

T-test analysis revealed that there were significant differences in preferred coaching styles based on gender. Table 6 shows that male athletes preferred more Autocratic $t(852) = 4.63, p < 0.05$ and Positive Feedback $t(852) = 2.09, p < 0.05$ compared to female athletes. On the other hand analysis on the preferred coaching styles based on type of

sport (team/individual) shows that there was no significant difference. Both team and individual athletes preferred the same style of leadership.

Table 7: Differences in preferred coaching style based on gender (T-test)

Preferred coaching styles	Gender	M	SD	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tail)
Training and Instruction	Male	4.10	0.77	0.49	852	0.621
	Female	4.07	0.65			
Democratic	Male	3.88	0.78	0.54	852	0.591
	Female	3.85	0.68			
Autocratic	Male	2.45	1.01	4.63	852	0.001
	Female	2.16	0.81			
Social Support	Male	3.78	0.76	1.90	852	0.058
	Female	3.67	0.71			
Positive Feedback	Male	3.63	0.83	2.09	852	0.037
	Female	3.50	0.80			

Significant Level (2 tail) $p < 0.05$

Based on age, ANOVA analysis revealed that there were significant difference in Training and Instruction $F(2, 851) = 4.68, p < 0.05$; Autocratic $F(2, 851) = 6.72, p < 0.05$ and Social Support $F(2, 851) = 4.91, p < 0.05$. Senior athletes (≥ 21 years old) preferred Training and Instruction and Social Support, where else young athletes (≥ 18 and 15 years old) preferred Autocratic coaching style. Table 8 showed the result of ANOVA analysis.

Table 8: Differences in preferred coaching style based on age (one-way ANOVA)

Preferred coaching styles		Sum square	df	F	Sig.
Training and Instruction	Between Group	5.001	2	4.675	0.010**
	Within Group	455.108	851		
	Total	460.109	853		
Democratic	Between Group	2.588	2	2.333	0.098
	Within Group	471.920	851		
	Total	474.508	853		
Autocratic	Between Group	12.157	2	6.724	0.001**
	Within Group	769.336	851		
	Total	781.493	853		
Social Support	Between Group	5.406	2	4.910	0.008**

	Within Group	468.442	851		
	Total	473.848	853		
Positive Feedback	Between Group	2.261	2	1.668	0.189
	Within Group	576.873	851		
	Total	579.134	853		

*Significant at $p < 0.05$ ** Significant at $p < 0.01$

4. Discussion

The aim of this study were to identify goal orientation and preferred coaching style among Malaysian Sports School athletes and the differences based on gender, age and type of sport participation. Malaysian Sport School athletes were found to be more task oriented than ego. This means that Malaysian Sports School athletes' focused more on the acquisition of skills as compare to winning or beating an opponent. These augur well for the future of sport in Malaysia as task-oriented athletes are often associated with positive self-image, satisfaction and high performance in sports [9-13, 32-33]

Results also revealed that there were significant difference in term of goal orientation based on gender, age and type of sports participation. Male athletes were found to be higher in task and ego orientation than female. This finding is consistent with previous study [15, 34] which confers that athletes high in task and ego orientation are better than athletes who high in ego and low in task or vice versa [34-36]. Therefore, coaches need to provide the appropriate environment for the Task and Ego goal orientation to be nurtured especially among female athletes.

The study also revealed that younger athletes were more task-oriented as compare to senior athletes. This finding was supported by [37-38] which indicated that younger athletes were more task-oriented than senior athletes. As such their aim are to improve their skills rather than defeating their opponents. Therefore, coaches should provide more Task-oriented training environment to increase motivation for learning especially to the senior athletes.

Results of this study also suggested that Training and Instruction was the most preferred coaching style followed by Democratic, Social Support and Positive Feedback. The findings was in agreement with previous studies which indicated that Training and Instruction coaching style is often preferred by athletes and has always ranked first or second most important coaching style.

In contrast, Autocratic style was the least popular and seldom employed by the coaches which was consistent with the previous findings [30, 39-43]. In particular, Malaysian Sports School athletes preferred coaches who allowed the athletes to discuss and decide goals, method of training and games strategies. This situation is evidenced by the election of the Democratic coaching style as the preferred coaching style after Training and Instruction. Thus, coaches must take into accounts the views and opinions of athletes when planning training strategies to enhance motivation and performance.

In terms of demographic differences, the findings demonstrated that there were difference in preferred coaching styles based on gender. Male athletes favoured more Autocratic coaching style and Positive Feedback as compare to female. This result was similar to the previous studies, which indicated that males preferred coaches with autocratic coaching approach than female athletes [21, 23-27, 40]. Beam, *et.al.* [25] suggested that the coaches who have full authority and like to make their own decision without the involvement of athletes are more suitable for male athletes. On the other hand, coaches for female athletes should involve athletes to take part in decision making.

According to age differences, younger athletes (Under 15 and 18) preferred more Autocratic coaching style than the senior athlete (Under 21). The findings of this study supported Leadership Style Model [44] who suggest that younger athletes who lack the experience and knowledge in skills, prefer coaches who give the final say and have full authority in their actions. This finding was consistent with [21, 23-26, 45-46] who found that senior athlete preferred Training and Instruction coaching style as compared to younger athletes. Senior athletes need a coach who often provides systematic training and specific instructions to improve their performance. This group of athletes has clear goals

in their involvement and in order to achieve that goal, a more systematic style of coaching style in terms of training and instruction is needed to improve their performance.

In conclusion, to improve the commitment and achievement of Malaysian Sports School athletes the authorities involved in the development and planning of the sport programme should know and understand the athletes' goal orientation and their preferred coaching styles. This information will enable coaches to effectively motivate athletes and structure intervention strategies to improve performance according to their gender, age and type of sports they involved.

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