

COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF ICE HOCKEY ACADEMY COACHES

Maria Daniela MACRA-OȘORHEAN¹, Hunor Flavius CRIȘAN²,
Paul Ovidiu RADU^{1,*}

*Received 2022 February 27; Revised 2023 April 21; Accepted 2023 April 24;
Available online 2023 May 30; Available print 2023 June 30.*

©2023 Studia UBB Educatio Artis Gymnasticae. Published by Babeș-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. Leadership style is an essential component of the effectiveness of the coach's work. There are three styles of coaches generally accepted in sports: dictatorial, democratic and negligent. Each of these styles has its own advantages and disadvantages, which is why it is important to understand each of them. **Purpose of the study.** The purpose of this research was to determine, by means of an applied questionnaire, to what extent coaches use leadership styles and their impact within a sports organization. **Methods and means.** To carry out this study, the questionnaire-based survey method was used - The Coaches' Interpersonal Style Questionnaire (Pulido et al., 2018). It included 10 questions with reference to the leadership style of the coaches. The questionnaire measured 3 forms of leadership style – democratic, authoritarian and negligent. The collected data were measured using a 5-item Likert scale represented by the numbers 1 – never, and 5 – frequently/always. **Results.** The comparative graphic clearly shows an absolute dominance of the democratic style in each center, in the dictatorial style there is a predominantly significant difference between clubs, and the negligent style is used less often or never. **Conclusions.** In general, the coaches have understood the modern trends and that is why the democratic leadership style prevails, managing to involve even very young athletes in decision-making, which also implies responsibility for both parties.

Keywords: *leadership styles, sports organizations, performance in sport*

¹ Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

² Zempleni Híuzok Association, Satoraljajuhely, Hungary

* Corresponding author: radu.paul1993@yahoo.ro

REZUMAT. *Studiu comparativ privind stilurile de conducere ale antrenorilor din cadrul academiei de hochei pe gheață.* Stilul de conducere este o componentă esențială a eficienței muncii antrenorului. Exprimă modul în care antrenorul, în calitate de lider, este capabil să își influențeze subordonații, sportivii, respectiv modul în care este capabil să influențeze activitățile acestora. Există trei stiluri de antrenor general acceptate în sport: dictatorial, democratic și neglijent. Fiecare dintre aceste stiluri are propriile avantaje și dezavantaje, motiv pentru care este important să le înțelegem pe fiecare dintre ele. **Scopul cercetării.** Scopul acestei cercetări a fost de a determina, prin intermediul unui chestionar aplicat, în ce măsură utilizează antrenorii stilurile de conducere și impactul acestora în cadrul a unei echipe/organizații sportive. **Metode de cercetare.** Pentru realizarea acestui studiu s-a utilizat metoda anchetei pe bază de chestionar - The Coaches' Interpersonal Style Questionnaire, acesta a cuprins 10 întrebări cu referire la stilul de conducere ale antrenorilor. Chestionarul a măsurat 3 forme ale stilului de conducere - democratic, autoritar și neglijent. Datele colectate au fost măsurate folosind scala Likert cu 5 itemi reprezentată prin numere 1 - niciodată, iar 5 - frecvent/întotdeauna. **Rezultate.** Pe diagrama comparativă se vede clar o dominanță absolută al stilului democratic în fiecare centre, în stilul dictatorial există o diferență preponderent semnificativă între cluburi, iar stilul neglijent este utilizat mai rar sau niciodată. **Concluzii.** În general, antrenorii au înțeles tendințele moderne și de aceea predomină stilul democratic de conducere, reușind să implice chiar și sportivii foarte tineri în luarea deciziilor, ceea ce presupune însă și responsabilitate pentru ambele părți.

Cuvinte cheie: *stilurile de conducere, organizații sportive, performanță în sport*

Introduction

The coaching profession has acquired a special importance and appreciation in the social life of the contemporary world. This profession is closely related to the achievement of the nation's sports performance capacity in any particular sports branch or discipline. In other words, the higher the knowledge and professional skills of the coaches will be, at all training levels of the athletes, the higher the nation's performance will be (Casey-May, 2019).

Different leadership styles and coaching attitudes have different meanings for each athlete, causing each player to react differently to the coaching style. Athletes perceive coaches in different ways, so what one athlete sees in a coach may be seen in a completely different way by another athlete (Casey-May, 2019).

As coaches spend so much time with their athletes, it is important to understand that they not only influence athletes' abilities, but also their psychological development (Brinton et al. 2017).

With these things in mind, no single style can be applied. Sometimes there is an overlap between coaching styles, but most coaches have their own dominant style. In the case of a team, not all styles will work for certain athletes, especially if the team is full of players who cannot identify with a certain style, in which case the coach will have to change their approach. Regardless of how good a coach is, athletes must also be able to accept one's style for their joint work to be fruitful (Aly, 2014).

Organization, administration and management are the action forces of sports organizations in any country. These three elements must work together for an association, club, league, event organizer or regional sports organization to achieve the highest level of efficiency and solve the problems that arise (Gomboş, 2012).

Leadership style is an essential component of the effectiveness of the coach's work. It expresses the way in which the coach, as a leader, is able to influence his subordinates, the athletes, respectively the way in which she is able to influence their activities (Irvin, 2016).

There are three styles of coaches generally accepted in sports: dictatorial, democratic and negligent. Each of these styles has its own advantages and disadvantages, which is why it is important to understand each of them. For the development of personal style it is important, first of all, that each coach knows their own identity and their own system of values. Generally, a coach will incorporate elements of each style in their own philosophy (Casey-May, 2019).

Table 1. Comparing different leadership styles (Irvin, 2016)

	The dictatorial style	The democratic style	The careless style
Philosophy	Focused on winning	Focused on athletes	There is no defined philosophy
Objective	Objective-oriented	Task-oriented	No objective
Decisions making	The coach takes all decisions	Involves the players	The players take the decisions
Communication style	The only who can speak	Talk, ask questions and listen	Listen
Communication Development	Little or nothing	High level	No
The meaning of victory	Coach decides	Defined by coach and athlete	Undefined
Athlete development	A low confidence	Trust the athletes	Does not show confidence
Motivation	Never or sometimes	Motivates everyone	No motivation
Training structure	Inflexible	Flexible	None

Purpose of study

The purpose of this research was to determine, by means of an applied questionnaire, to what extent coaches use leadership styles and their impact within a sports organization.

Methods and means

Subjects of study

This study was carried out in the period 01.03.2022-25.03.2022 where the coaches from the Ice Hockey Academy participated, which includes the following centers: Gheorgheni, Cârța, Miercurea Ciuc, Tîrgu-Mureș, Tîrgu Secuiesc and Sfântu Gheorghe. A number of 32 subjects answered the questionnaire from the Ice Hockey Academy (6 from Gheorgheni, 5 from Cârța, 6 from Miercurea Ciuc, 5 from Tîrgu-Mureș, 5 from Tîrgu-Secuiesc, 5 from Sfântu Gheorghe).

Instruments used on study

To carry out this study, the questionnaire-based survey method was used - The Coaches' Interpersonal Style Questionnaire (Pulido et al., 2018). It included 10 questions with reference to the leadership style of the coaches. The questionnaire measured 3 forms of leadership style – democratic, authoritarian and negligent.

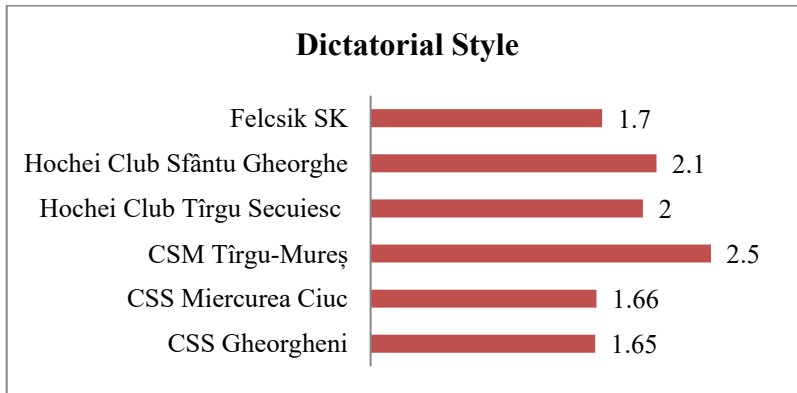
The collected data were measured using a 5-item Likert scale represented by the numbers 1 – never, and 5 – frequently/always.

Table 2. The questions from the questionnaire

Category	Number of items
Dictatorial style	2, 3, 6
Democratic style	1, 4, 9
Negligent style	5, 7, 8

Results

The results presented below show leadership styles of the Hockey Academy coaches for each category presented in table no. 2.

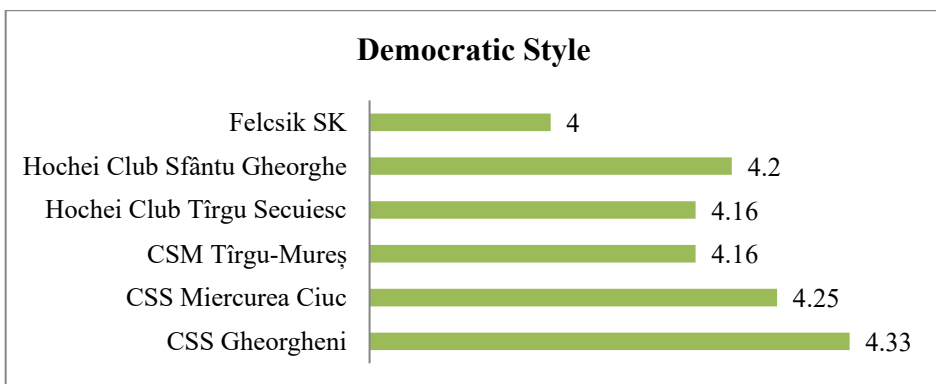


Graph 1. Dictatorial style

As it can be seen in the graph above, the centers had a different result in the “dictatorial style” category, which represents the fact that every coach sometimes also uses the dictatorial style, the most at CSM Tîrgu-Mureş, and the least at CSM Miercurea Ciuc and at CSS Gheorgheni.

The category “Dictatorship style” is exemplified in graph 1 and includes the following statements from the questionnaire:

- The coach decides for themselves what must be done and how it must be done;
- The coach avoids consulting the group regarding the decisions they want to make;
- Refuses to compromise with athletes.

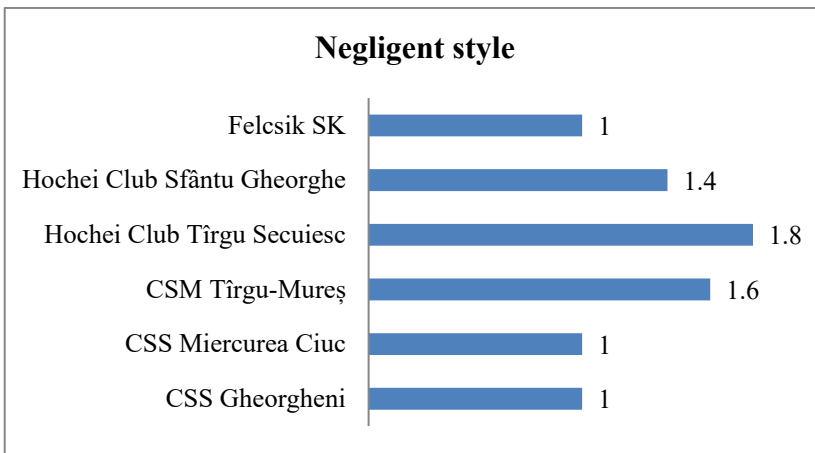


Graph 2. Democratic style

This category sees almost perfect equality between clubs, the democratic style has a massive dominance which means that most coaches often prefer this style.

The “Democratic Style” category is exemplified in graph 2 and includes the following statements from the questionnaire:

- Helps athletes with their personal problems;
- After explaining the exercise, gives the athletes the opportunity to ask questions;
- Accepts suggestions for change from the group and if he/she agrees with them, implements them.

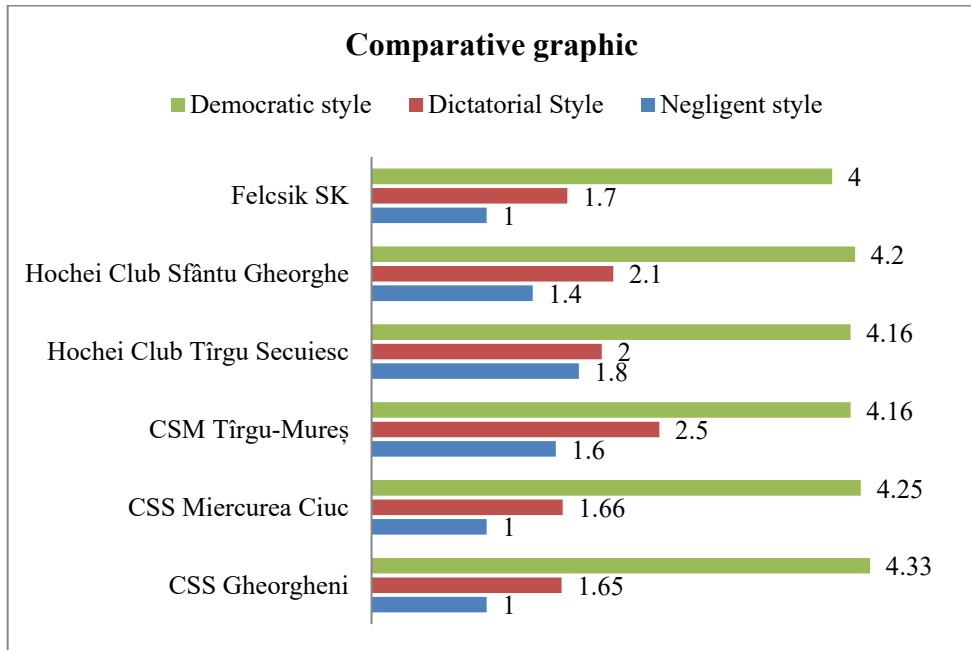


Graph 3. Negligent style

In this category, Hockey Club Tîrgu Secuiesc had a higher percentage compared to the other clubs, but in general there is no significant difference between the centers. Coaches rarely use (Hockey Club Tîrgu Secuiesc, Hockey Club Sfântu Gheorghe, CSM Tîrgu-Mureș) or never (Felcsik SK, CSS Miercurea Ciuc and CSS Gheorgheni) this style.

The “Negligent Style” category is exemplified in graph 3 and includes the following statements from the questionnaire:

- They only intervene in a situation when the problems become serious;
- They avoid getting involved when important problems arise;
- They are absent when they are needed.



Graph 4. Comparative graphic from all organizations sports

The comparative graphic clearly shows an absolute dominance of the democratic style in each center, in the dictatorial style there is a predominantly significant difference between clubs, and the negligent style is used less often or never.

Discussion

By interpreting the first item (dictatorial style), we can observe a different scores for the six centers (1.7 Felcsik SK, 2.1 Hockey Club Sfântu Gheorghe, 2 Hockey Club Tîrgu Secuiesc, 2.5 CSM Tîrgu-Mureş, 1.66 CSS Miercurea Ciuc and CSS Gheorgheni). This result implies that the dictatorial leadership style, although not dominant, is present at all centers, being the most present at CSM Tîrgu-Mureş and the least present at CSS Gheorgheni and CSS Miercurea Ciuc. When the situation calls for it, coaches also adopt this leadership style.

This type of coaching style has been shown to work better in team sports than in individual sports, and there is some evidence that the gender of the athlete also influences the level of acceptance of a coach who takes a dictatorial approach. Studies show, for example, that players on a female team

respond better to instructions from a male coach with autocratic training methods than from a female coach with the same style (Reinboth et al., 2004; Irvin, 2016).

It's a style that is generally preferred by older players over younger ones, as they have the experience and discernment to understand why they are being asked to perform certain tasks at certain times. While young players may need an autocratic approach to developing raw skills, in the long run it can be harmful for them to have no say in how training is conducted, as they do not develop a sense of autonomy in regarding training, which may affect their attitude towards sport later in life (Lyle & Cushion, 2010; Pope & Wilson, 2015)).

The second feature is shown by the democratic style, with similar results for all clubs with little variation between them. In this case, the scores were: 4 Felcsik SK, 4.2 Hockey Club Sfântu Gheorghe, 4.16 Hockey Club Tîrgu Secuiesc and CSM Tîrgu-Mureș, 4.25 CSS Miercurea Ciuc and 4.33 CSS Gheorgheni. There is a clear preference of the coaches for the democratic style at all centers. This means that the leaders also involve the athletes in their decisions and that they give them enough autonomy.

This style can be applied more effectively to individual sports. Younger players, up to the age of 14, tend to prefer the democratic style, and studies show that this style helps early teens and young adults develop a sense of leadership over their training and prepares them to work with a potential autocratic coach later in their careers (Casey-May, 2019).

The last item measured is the negligent style, where there is also little variation in results between the six clubs surveyed. Under this aspect, the scores were as follows: 1 Felcsik SK, 1.4 Hockey Club Sfântu Gheorghe, 1.8 Hockey Club Tîrgu Secuiesc, 1.6 CSM Tîrgu-Mureș, 1 CSS Miercurea Ciuc and CSS Gheorgheni. In this case, it can be seen that this is the style least used by coaches as a possible leadership style. Given that this is junior training, it would not be appropriate to apply this leadership style to these athletes.

This style is best suited to mature players who already have the skills, creativity, self-awareness and motivation to self-manage. For the coach, this approach involves building relationships and committing to athletes as individuals. Although it requires additional work, it can be effective for experienced teams if they are mature enough to handle being out of control (Sprecher & Fehr, 2011; Casey-May, 2019).

The summary chart shows the overall scores for each center for different leadership styles. There is an absolute dominance of the democratic leadership style (no score below 4), some variation of the dictatorial style depending on the club, and the careless leadership style is present either not at all (Felcsik SK, CSS Miercurea Ciuc, CSS Gheorgheni) or only to a very small extent (Hockey Club Sfântu Gheorghe, Hockey Club Tîrgu Secuiesc, CSM Tîrgu-Mureș).

Conclusions

In each of the six centres, as it can be seen from the results, the democratic leadership style is the predominant one, with every club scoring a 4 or higher on this aspect. Comparing the clubs, I can say that there is very little variation in this style of management. With this in mind, I can say that there is a higher level of satisfaction among the athletes at each club, i.e. a better quality of performance.

Regarding the dictatorial leadership style, there is some variation between the different centres, with scores between 1.65 and 2.5 based on totaling the results, which means that, to a lesser or greater extent, when it is necessary, coaches also apply this style. In such cases, work performance is higher, but this requires constant monitoring.

Comparing negligent leading style, there are some variations too, but it cannot be said that this style is dominant. Here, the scores ranged from 1 to 1.8, meaning that this leadership style is not at all or very rarely present, which is understandable given that these are junior athletes.

In general, the coaches have understood the modern trends and that is why the democratic leadership style prevails, managing to involve even very young athletes in decision-making, which also implies responsibility for both parties.

REFERENCES

- Aly, E. (2014). Communication management among athletes and coaches. *European Scientific Journal*, vol. 3., pp. 1857-1881.
- Brinton, C., Hill, B., & Ward, P. (2017). *Authoritative coach: Building youth through sport*. Retrieved from Proquest: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2006817230?pq-origsite=gscholar>
- Casey-May, H. (2019). Coaching Styles, Athletes Needs Satisfaction, and Identity: An Analysis of Athlete-Coach Relationship. *Digital Commons, Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, pp. 175.
- Gombos, L. (2012). *Comunicare in activitatile sportive*. Cluj-Napoca: CNCSIS (24).
- Lyle, J., & Cushion, C. (2010). *Sports Coaching*. London: Elsevier.
- Pope, J., & Wilson, P. (2015). Testing a sequence of relationship from interpersonal coaching styles to rugby performance, guided by the coach-athlete motivation model. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, vol. 13(3), pp. 258-272.

- Pulido, J., Sanchez-Olivia, D., Leo, F., Sanchez-Canod, J., & Garcia-Calvo, T. (2018). Development and validation of Coaches Interpersonal Style Questionnaire. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science, vol. 22(1)*, pp. 25-37.
- Reinboth, M., Duda, J., & Ntoumanis, N. (2004). Dimensions of coaching behavior, need satisfaction, and the psychological and physical welfare of young athletes. *Motivation and Emotion, vol. 28 (3)*, pp. 297-313.
- Sprecher, S., & Fehr, B. (2011). Dispositional attachment and relationship-specific attachment as predictors of compassionat love for a partner. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, vol. 28*, pp. 558-574.