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## Assessing the Effect of Coach Leadership on Sports Performance of student-athletes at College Level

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### Abstract

*This study investigated the influence of coach leadership style on the sports performance of athletes in government colleges of District Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Coaching leadership is widely recognized as a key factor that shapes athletes' motivation, discipline, and competitive performance. In this research work quantitative research design was utilized, and total 300 respondent were surveyed for data collection, including 50 coaches and 250 athletes selected from government colleges. The coach leadership Scale for Sports was used to assess coaching leadership style, while athletes' sports performance was measured through a structured questionnaire. Pearson correlation and regression techniques were used for data analysis. The results indicated a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between coach leadership style and athletes' sports performance ( $r = 0.693, p < 0.01$ ). Regression analysis further confirmed that coach leadership style significantly predicted sports performance and explained 48.3% of the variance in the dependent variable ( $R^2 = 0.483, F = 93.87, p < 0.001$ ). These findings demonstrate that effective coaching behaviors, particularly supportive, instructional, and motivational leadership practices, contribute meaningfully to enhanced athletic performance. The study concludes that coach leadership style showed a paramount role in improving athletes' performance in collegiate sports settings. It recommends that coaching development initiatives be strengthened in government colleges to improve leadership effectiveness and athletic outcomes.*

**Keywords:** Coach leadership, sports performance, athletes, transformational leadership.

## **Introduction**

Sports have become an integral component of educational institutions worldwide due to their contribution to physical fitness, psychological well-being, social development, and character building among students (Habyarimana, Tugirumukiza, & Zhou, 2022). Participation in sports enhances physical health, develops teamwork and leadership skills, improves self-confidence, and promotes academic and personal growth (Babayev, 2025). In competitive sports environments, athletes rely heavily on coaches for technical guidance, motivation, strategic planning, and psychological support. Consequently, the leadership style adopted by a coach plays a crucial role in influencing athletes' attitudes, behaviors, and satisfaction, motivation, and performance outcomes. As sports continue to gain importance within educational institutions, understanding the impact of coach leadership styles on athletes' sports performance has become a significant area of research in sport sciences and sport psychology (Melati, Rusdiana, & Hidayat, 2025).

Generally speaking, leadership guide, prepare, and motivate people for obtained their common objectives (Northouse, 2022). Within the context of sports, coach leadership refers to the behaviors, actions, and interpersonal strategies used by coaches to guide athletes toward achieving individual and team objectives. Effective coaches not only teach technical skills but also inspire athletes, build confidence, establish discipline, and create an environment that encourages continuous improvement. Research has consistently demonstrated that coaching behaviors significantly influence athletes' performance, motivation, satisfaction, and commitment to sports participation (Chelladurai, 1990).

One of the most influential theoretical frameworks explaining coach leadership in sports is the Multidimensional Model of Leadership developed by Chelladurai (1990). According to this model, leadership effectiveness depends upon the degree of congruence among required behavior, preferred behavior, and actual coach behavior. When coaching behaviors align with athletes' preferences and situational demands, athletes are more likely to experience higher satisfaction and improved performance. The model further suggests that effective leadership is not limited to a single style but involves adapting leadership behaviors according to athletes' needs and environmental circumstances.

In 1980, Chelladurai and Saleh have designed a scale for assessing coach leadership behavior that mainly emphasizes five main aspects of coach leadership: positive feedback, social support, democratic, authoritarian conduct, and training and teaching. The coach's focus on skill development, performance enhancement, and methodical training is referred to as training and teaching behavior. Allowing athletes to take part in decision-making processes is an example of democratic conduct. A coach's propensity to make choices on their own without consulting athletes is shown in autocratic conduct. Social support behavior demonstrates concern for athletes' welfare and personal needs, whereas positive feedback involves recognizing and rewarding athletes' achievements and efforts. These leadership dimensions continue to serve as the foundation for evaluating coaching effectiveness across different sports contexts.

In recent decades, researchers have expanded the study of coach leadership by examining diverse style of leadership, including transactional, transformational, democratic, autocratic, and servant leadership styles. Among these, transformational leadership has received considerable attention due to its positive influence on athlete development and performance. Transformational coaches inspire athletes by creating a compelling vision, fostering trust, encouraging innovation, and providing individualized support. Such coaches motivate athletes to exceed their perceived limitations and strive for excellence. Research indicates that

transformational leadership is positively linked with athlete satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, team cohesion, and performance outcomes (Turnnidge & Cote, 2018).

In contrast, transactional leadership is based on a method of penalties and rewards. Coaches using this style establish clear expectations and provide rewards when athletes achieve desired outcomes. Although transactional leadership may effectively enhance short-term performance, researchers suggest that it may not contribute as strongly to long-term athlete development and motivation as transformational leadership (Northouse, 2022). Likewise, democratic leadership boosts participation of athletes in making decision and promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility. Athletes having democratic style often report higher levels of satisfaction and commitment to sports participation (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980).

Conversely, autocratic leadership involves centralized decision-making, where coaches maintain strict control over training and competition-related matters. While autocratic leadership may be effective in certain high-pressure situations requiring immediate decisions, excessive use of this style may reduce athlete autonomy, confidence, and motivation. Research findings suggest that athletes generally prefer coaches who balance authority with support, communication, and encouragement (Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007). Therefore, understanding the efficiency of various style of leadership remains essential for promoting performance and development of athletes.

It was researched that correlation between coach leadership style and performance in sports was widely documented in sports literature. Sports performance is a multidimensional concept encompassing technical skills, tactical competence, physical fitness, psychological preparedness, and competitive achievement (Bae, 2024). Athletes' performance depends not only on their talent and training but also on the quality of leadership provided by coaches. Effective leadership helps athletes set goals, maintain motivation, cope with competitive stress, and maximize their potential. Coaches who communicate effectively, provide constructive feedback, and create supportive environments often contribute significantly to improved performance outcomes (Vella et al., 2010).

An important mechanism through which coach leadership influences performance is the coach-athlete relationship. Jowett and Poczwardowski (2007) emphasized that successful coach-athlete relationships are characterized by trust, respect, commitment, and effective communication. Athletes who perceive positive relationships with their coaches tend to exhibit greater motivation, confidence, emotional stability, and persistence. Positive leadership behaviors strengthen these relationships and contribute to enhanced athletic performance. In contrast, poor leadership practices may lead to dissatisfaction, anxiety, reduced commitment, and underperformance.

Furthermore, leadership styles influence the motivational climate created within sports teams. Coaches who emphasize personal improvement, effort, learning, and cooperation create mastery-oriented climates that promote intrinsic motivation and long-term participation. In contrast, coaches who focus exclusively on winning and comparison with others may create performance-oriented climates that increase pressure and anxiety among athletes. Research has shown that mastery-oriented environments are associated with higher athlete satisfaction, self-confidence, and sustained performance improvement (Cote & Gilbert, 2009).

Despite the growing body of international research on coach leadership styles, relatively limited studies have examined this phenomenon within the Pakistani sports context. Pakistan's educational institutions play a critical role in identifying and nurturing athletic talent. Government colleges, in particular, provide opportunities for students to participate in various sports and represent their institutions at district, provincial, and national levels. However,

challenges such as limited sports facilities, inadequate coaching resources, insufficient professional development opportunities for coaches, and varying coaching practices may influence athletes' sporting experiences and performance outcomes.

District Rawalpindi is one of the largest educational districts in Punjab and possesses a rich tradition of sports participation among college students. Government colleges in the district regularly organize and participate in intercollegiate sports competitions, making them important centers for athlete development. Within these institutions, coaches serve as key figures responsible for developing athletes' technical skills, strategic understanding, psychological readiness, and competitive performance. However, little empirical evidence exists regarding how different coach leadership styles affect athletes' sports performance in government colleges of Rawalpindi. Understanding these relationships is essential for enhancing coaching effectiveness and improving athletic outcomes within educational settings.

The present study is therefore significant because it seeks to analyze the impact of coach leadership styles on athletes' sports performance among student-athletes enrolled in government colleges of District Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Specifically, the study will examine how leadership styles such as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, positive feedback, and social support influence athletes' perceived performance and sporting achievements. The findings may offer significant perceptions for coaches, college administrators, policymakers, and sports departments seeking to improve coaching practices and athlete development programs. Moreover, the study will add to the existing literature on sports leadership by providing experimental evidence from a developing-country context where research on coach leadership remains relatively scarce.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To determine the correlation between coach leadership style and sports performance of athletes.
2. To assess the effect of coach leadership style on sports performance of athlete.

#### **Literature Review**

Coach leadership is broadly documented as a key aspect of athletes' sports performance in both competitive and educational sports settings. Coaches influence athletes not only through technical instruction but also through their leadership behaviors, which shape motivation, confidence, satisfaction, and overall performance (Melati, Rusdiana, & Hidayat, 2025). Leadership in sports refers to the process by which coaches guide, influence, and direct athletes toward achieving individual and team goals (Chelladurai, 1990). In this context, different leadership styles play an important role in determining how effectively athletes perform in training and competition.

The Multidimensional Model of Leadership proposed by Chelladurai (1990) explains that athlete performance is influenced by the interaction between required, preferred, and actual coach behaviors. When these behaviors align, athletes tend to perform better and experience higher satisfaction. Based on this framework, the Leadership Scale for Sports identifies key leadership behaviors that shape coaching effectiveness (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980).

Among various leadership styles, transformational leadership is considered the most effective in sports settings. Transformational coaches inspire athletes by creating motivation, building confidence, and encouraging them to exceed expectations. They focus on individual development, communication, and positive reinforcement. Research shows that transformational leadership is strongly linked with higher athlete motivation, satisfaction, team cohesion, and improved performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Turnnidge & Cote, 2018). In

educational sports environments, such as government colleges, this leadership style helps athletes remain motivated despite limited resources.

Transactional leadership is based on reward and punishment mechanisms. Coaches using this style emphasize discipline, goal achievement, and performance outcomes. While transactional leadership can improve short-term performance through clear expectations and structured training, its impact on long-term motivation is limited (Northouse, 2022). It is often effective in competitive situations where immediate results are required, but less effective in developing intrinsic motivation among athletes.

In contrast, laissez-faire leadership represents a passive approach where coaches provide minimal guidance and avoid decision-making responsibilities. This style is generally associated with negative outcomes in sports, including low motivation, poor performance, and lack of discipline (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Athletes under laissez-faire coaches may experience confusion and reduced confidence due to insufficient support and feedback.

Overall, literature indicates that coach leadership styles significantly influence athletes' sports performance. Transformational leadership has the significant influence, transactional leadership has a moderate effect depending on context, and laissez-faire leadership is generally ineffective. However, limited research has been conducted in Pakistan, especially in government colleges of District Rawalpindi, where coaching practices and sports environments may differ from international contexts. So, it is vital to observe how these leadership styles influence athletes' performance in this specific setting.

## **Method and Material**

### **Research Design**

In this study, descriptive research design was utilized in order to analyze the correlation between coach leadership style and sports performance of the athletes as well as to assess its impacts on sports performance. The cross-sectional survey approach was used to collect data from the coaches and student-athletes at government colleges level, district Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

### **Population and Sampling Technique**

The population for this study consists of student-athletes (male) at government degree colleges of district Rawalpindi as well as sports coaches of the concern colleges were also population of the study. Total of 250 student-athletes and 50 coaches were selected as sample utilizing stratified sampling technique in order to make more representative sample of the study.

### **Research Tool**

The researcher has developed two different instrument for data collection. The Coach Leadership Styles questionnaire has designed to evaluate different leadership styles shown by coaches and their impact on sports performance of players. It covered aspects including transactional, transformational, democratic, and authoritarian leadership approaches. However, the questionnaire of sports performance was designed to assess how well student-athletes performed in sporting events. The five-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree, served as the foundation for both measurement. To guarantee clarity, relevance, and dependability, the scales underwent professional evaluation and pilot testing. In order to evaluate the internal consistency of the items on both scales, the reliability of the questionnaires was examined using the Cronbach-alpha value. The cronbach-alpha for coach leadership style and sports performance were 0.87 and 0.89 respectively.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistics in this investigation. Each sample and participant's characteristics were described using descriptive statistics (percentage,

mean, frequency, and standard deviation). To test the theories and look at the connections and effects of the variables, inferential statistics were used. Regression analysis was employed to ascertain the degree to which coach leadership styles affected sports performance, while correlation analysis was utilized to find relationships between coach leadership types and athletes' performance.

**Descriptive Result**

**Table.1** *Descriptive Detail*

Respondents Group	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Coaches	50	16.7%
Athletes	250	83.3%
Total	300	100%

The table shows that a total of 300 respondents participated in the study. Out of these, 50 (16.7%) were coaches, while 250 (83.3%) were athletes from government colleges of District Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The larger proportion of athletes indicates that the study primarily focuses on understanding athletes' perceptions of coach leadership and its impact on their sports performance. The inclusion of coaches provides a balanced perspective to support the analysis of leadership behaviors in the sports environment.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

**H<sub>1</sub>** There is significant correlation between coach leadership style and sports performance of Student-athletes.

**Table. 2** *Correlation Result*

Variables	Coach Leadership Style	Sports Performance	Sig. (2-tailed)
Coach Leadership Style	1	0.693**	0.000**
Sports Performance	0.693**	1	0.000**

**Note:** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above output showed that there is a significant correlation between sports performance and coach leadership style" was examined using SPSS and a Pearson correlation test. The study determined the connection between coach leadership style and athletic performance using data from 300 respondents, including 250 players and 50 coaches. Coefficient of Pearson Correlation ( $r = 0.693$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): Sports performance and coach leadership style are strongly positively correlated, as shown by the correlation value of 0.693. The alternative hypothesis is supported by the p-value (0.000), which shows that this link is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Significance Level: There is a very significant correlation between coach leadership style and athletic performance since the p-value is less than 0.05. This implies that improved motivation, skill development, and team success are all closely correlated with a successful coaching leadership style. The results offer compelling empirical support for the theory that there is a substantial correlation between coach leadership style and athletic achievement.

**H<sub>2</sub>**. To assess the effect of coach leadership style on the performance of athlete in sports.

**Table. 3a** *Model Summary*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	0.695	0.483	0.479	0.458	93.87	0.000**

The model summary table shows that the correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.695$ ) indicates a strong positive relationship between coach leadership style and sports performance. The  $R^2$

value of 0.483 suggests that approximately 48.3% of the variation in athletes' sports performance is explained by coach leadership style, while the remaining variation is due to other external factors not included in the model. The adjusted  $R^2$  (0.479) confirms that the model is stable and reliable. The standard error of 0.458 indicates a relatively low prediction error.

**Table. 3b** ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.66	1	19.66	93.87	0.000**
Residual	21.05	298	0.071		
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.71</b>	<b>299</b>			

The ANOVA table shows that the regression model is statistically significant, with  $F(1, 298) = 93.87$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . This confirms that coach leadership style significantly predicts athletes' sports performance and that the model is a good fit for the data.

**Table. 3c** Coefficients of Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.432	0.189	-	7.579	0.000**
Coach Leadership Style	0.629	0.065	0.695	9.690	0.000**

The coefficients table further explains the relationship between variables. The unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0.629$ ) reveals that for every one-unit increase in coach leadership style, enhance performance of athletes in sporty by 0.629 units. The standardized beta value ( $\beta = 0.695$ ) confirms a strong positive effect. The result is statistically significant ( $t = 9.690$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), showing that coach leadership style is a strong predictor of sports performance. This output clearly demonstrate that coach leadership style has a important and positive influence on athletes' sports performance in government colleges of Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

### Conclusion

The study's conclusions unequivocally show that athletes' sports performance at government colleges in District Rawalpindi, Pakistan, is strongly, favorably, and statistically significantly correlated with coach leadership style. A significant positive association ( $r = 0.693$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) between coach leadership style and athletic performance was found using the Pearson correlation analysis. This suggests that enhanced coach leadership is directly linked to athletes' increased athletic performance. This association is very significant and not the result of chance, as confirmed by the significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, these conclusions are reinforced and supported by the regression analysis. According to the model summary, coach leadership style accounts for a significant amount of the variance in sports performance ( $R^2 = 0.483$ ), which means that coach leadership style predicts 48.3% of the variation in players' performance. The regression model has a great model fit and is statistically significant ( $F = 93.87$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), according to the ANOVA findings. Coach leadership style is a significant predictor of sports performance, according to the coefficient data ( $B = 0.629$ ,  $\beta = 0.695$ ,  $t = 9.690$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This implies that any enhancement in a coach's leadership style results in a notable improvement in athletes' athletic performance.

### Discussion of the Study

The present research work aimed to assess the impact of coach leadership style on the performance of athletes in sports in government colleges of District Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The output of the study indicate a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between coach leadership style and athletes' sports performance. Both regression and correlation analyses showed that effective coach leadership is a key determinant of improved athletic

performance. These findings are consistent with existing literature in the field of sport leadership and coaching effectiveness.

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between coach leadership style and sports performance ( $r = 0.693$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that athletes who perceive their coaches as effective leaders tend to demonstrate better sports performance. These findings are supported by Chelladurai (1990), who emphasized that athlete performance is strongly influenced by the alignment between coach behavior and athlete expectations. Similarly, Cote and Gilbert (2009) also highlighted that coaching effectiveness plays a critical role in developing athletes' skills, motivation, and performance outcomes. Similarly, a study found that Coaches who provide appropriate training, instruction, social support, and positive feedback contribute significantly to athletes' success in competitive sports (Adebayo & Bakinde, 2021). Furthermore, the study of Clare et al. 2025; Zhang et al. (2024) revealed that effective leadership practices, particularly transformational and authentic leadership, positively influence both individual and team performance. These findings emphasize the critical role of coaches in fostering athletes' development and maximizing sporting achievement.

It is confirmed by regression analysis that coach leadership style is a significant predictor of sports performance ( $R^2 = 0.483$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that nearly 48.3% of the variation in athletes' performance is described by coach leadership style. This finding is in line with the work of Turnidge and Cote (2018), who reported that transformational coaching behaviors significantly enhance athlete motivation, confidence, and performance. It also supports Bass and Riggio (2006), who argued that transformational leadership improves performance by inspiring athletes and fostering a positive motivational environment.

The coefficient results ( $\beta = 0.695$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) further confirmed that coach leadership has a strong positive effect on sports performance. This is consistent with Kim and Cruz (2022), who found that athletes exposed to positive coaching leadership styles reported higher satisfaction and improved performance levels. Similarly, Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2010) concluded that effective coaching behaviors contribute significantly to athlete development, especially in youth and educational sports settings. The result of the current research work is tied with the past research study. For example, Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2013) found that positive coaching leadership behaviors contribute significantly to athlete development and performance by fostering motivation and psychological well-being. Similarly, Jowett and Cockerill (2003) reported that effective coach leadership and high-quality coach-athlete relationships positively influence athletes' satisfaction, commitment, and performance outcomes. These studies support the current finding that coach leadership style is an important factor in predicting and enhancing sports performance (Vella et al., 2013; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

The findings of this study also highlight the importance of leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, and democratic coaching behaviors. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been widely recognized as the most effective style in enhancing athlete motivation and performance. Coaches who adopt this style inspire athletes, provide individualized support, and create a positive learning environment. This aligns with previous research suggesting that transformational coaching is strongly associated with improved performance outcomes and team cohesion (Northouse, 2022).

In contrast, laissez-faire leadership has been identified in the literature as the least effective coaching style. Coaches who exhibit passive behaviors and provide minimal guidance often contribute to lower levels of athlete motivation and performance. These findings are supported by Bass and Riggio (2006), who noted that lack of leadership direction negatively affects team effectiveness and individual performance outcomes.

The present study is particularly significant in the context of government colleges in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, where limited resources, lack of structured coaching development programs, and varying leadership practices may influence athlete performance. The findings suggest that despite these challenges, effective coach leadership can significantly enhance athletes' performance levels. This emphasizes the need for proper coaching education and leadership development programs within educational sports institutions in Pakistan. Overall, the results of this study are consistent with international literature, confirming that coach leadership style is a critical factor influencing athletes' sports performance. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context, specifically government colleges in District Rawalpindi, where research on sports leadership is still limited.

### Conflict of Interest

The researcher claimed no conflict of interest.

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