

Original research article

MANAGEMENT STYLES IN SPORT

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Abstract. *A sports team represents a formal group that faces certain tasks. One of the important parameters of the in-group relationships is its management. Previous studies indicated an association between management styles in the sports organization and certain athletes' characteristics. The aim of the present study was to determine the existence of significant differences between certain management styles (autocratic, democratic, and integrative) in relation to participants' sports status (active athletes or sports officials), gender, and type of sports that male athletes are involved in (football, handball, and basketball). The sample consisted of 136 participants, 92 team sports athletes and 44 sports officials (sport club managers and coaches from Niš). Of the participants, 113 were male, and 23 were female. The most important results of this study show that there is no statistically significant difference in terms of management style preference between sports officials and active athletes, and the female participants preferred autocratic and democratic styles more than the male participants. There are differences between the athletes from various team sports, and differences of preferences in the integrative management style are the least notable.*

Key words: *sports team, management style, gender, type of sports.*

INTRODUCTION

A sports team represents a formal group, which faces certain tasks. Although a sports group, unlike most other formal groups, has a stronger need for the development of informal relationships, because of cohesion and meeting the socio-emotional needs of sport group

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members, its effectiveness depends on to a great extent (Milojević, 2004; Lazarević, 2001). This defines a group as a process of constant social and psychological changes (group dynamics) that take place in the sphere of interpersonal relations, relations of individual and common goals, thus serving as an estimator of group development level. Belonging to a group largely depends on the attraction factors, ie. the attractiveness of the group for the individual (Milojević, 2004). This attraction can be determined by the ability of the group to meet the needs of its members, through consistency target matching of individuals and groups, common attitudes, interests, etc. (Cartwright, as cited in Rot, 1983).

One of the most important group characteristics is its cohesiveness, which is particularly important when it comes to sports teams. Carron (Carron, as cited in Cox, 2002) defines team cohesion as a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency of a group to gather and maintain unity in achieving goals and tasks. Mayo (Mayo, as cited in Paranosić & Lazarević, 1975) states: The most efficient group is not the one that is composed of the most effective individuals, but one that in the interaction of all of its individuals provides the best results, and a coach has a major impact on relationships within the sports group. Some studies confirm the link between the style of leadership and team cohesion (Ramzanezhad & Keshtan, 2009).

Certainly, there are some differences between sports groups. The basic difference is between the amateur and non-amateur (semi-professional and professional) groups, and team and individual sports. In the amateur sports groups emotional investment and a sense of freedom dominate, and it can be concluded that emotional factors in these relationships are of the utmost importance (Milojević, 2004). Paranosić (1982) considers a sports group a second family. Due to these specifics some authors (Thiel & Mayer, 2009) propose consideration of the new concepts of management in voluntary sports clubs.

One of the important parameters of group relations is its management. It affects the climate that prevails in the group, the communication, the way of making decisions and their acceptance, and hence the success of the team as a sports group. As viewed by the management theoreticians, each manager should take care of the people he manages, and should be familiar with their characteristics (Vujić, 2006). In accordance with this, coaches should know the psychological and physical characteristics of the athletes and adjust their actions to each individual in order to achieve optimal results.

Management can be viewed from different aspects: the management process aspect and the aspect of a manager as a person (Frigon & Jackson, 1996). Management is, in any case, linked to the decision-making and management styles by which these decisions will be made (Tomson, 2000). In the literature (Lazarević, 2001) the coach and captain are indicated as decision-makers in sports teams, but we believe that in certain moments club managers can have a significant impact too.

As coach plays a significant role in the development of an individual and group development, which requires special qualities. In addition to those described in the general literature on management (Wren & Voich, 1994) these are professional quality, leadership ability, more intelligence, adaptability, confidence, determination, strength, courage, self-confidence. There are features that are specific for sports such as knowledge of pedagogical and psychological principles, a humanistic approach to work, good role model for identification, etc (Bačanac, Petrović, & Manojlović, 2011).

Speaking about the relationship between a coach and an athlete, Cox (2002) emphasizes the importance of their compatibility as a determinant of the success of the team and a sense of satisfaction for belonging to a given team. The relationship between a coach and an

athlete will affect the general climate and motivation (Bortoli, Robazza, & Giabardo, 1995; Turman, 2003). Studies show an association between sports behavior and the perceived way of leadership (Stornes & Bru, 2002). Coaches have numerous roles. Milojević (2004) stated the following roles of the coach: the role of a *father*, the role of *older brother* usually occurring when the coach is close to the team members in terms of years, the role of a *coach-master*, almost a charismatic one, and the role of a *professor* insisting primarily on learning and practice. However, the basis of his authority is in the high professional qualities making him convenient for the elderly, seniors groups, and not for the younger players who need emotional support. Coaches also perform several functions, such as planners, motivators, executors, experts, symbols, controllers, etc. (Bačanac et al., 2011).

When it comes to management styles that represent ways of decision-making (Tomson, 2000), the earliest discovered ones should be defined and considered as basic, given that in a number of management styles they are referred to in the literature as actions and behavior which can be identified as typical for them. These styles of management are: autocratic, democratic and liberal management (Bojanović, 1995).

In autocratic management, a group leader makes these decisions on his own, requires full submission, acceptance and execution of his decisions. Communication is one-way, from the coaches to the athletes, while other forms of communication are controlled (Lazarević, 2001). The structure of the group is strictly hierarchical and the basic means of controlling the execution of tasks is punishment. This form of management in the sports group, although sometimes necessary, can give some results, but is generally undesirable. Lazarević (2001) claims that this kind of management can make players completely passive, freeing them from any responsibility, and even if it corresponds to the players, it is not at all conducive to their development and maturation. Older athletes, from higher competition ranks, often prefer this style of management characterized by inflexibility and focus on tasks, but in combination with the advisory and democratic approach (Bačanac et al., 2011). Studies support the allegation that the coaches' focus on the autocratic management style is positively associated with non-adaptive perfectionism in athletes (Greblo, Keresteš, & Kotzmuth, 2013).

Democratic management means cooperation between the coach and the team, assignment of roles, duties and responsibilities (Lazarević, 2001). Players participate in decision-making, planning, goal settings, and determining of activities. Communication takes place in all directions, and decisions are easily accepted because of the active involvement in their making (Lazarević, 2001). This atmosphere leads to the creation of a mature group that works well and accepts responsibility. This management model has significant advantages over the autocratic one, although it is not always possible to apply it in sports. Research shows that autocratic coaches are not more successful than democratic ones (Pratt & Eitzen, 1989). Regardless of the sports context, it was determined that a democratic management style is associated with the pleasure of group members, but also with the complexity of the task moderating this relationship (Gastil, 1994).

Liberal, anarchic, or laissez-fair management is not a management in the true sense because it is based on the complete freedom of group members to do what they think they should do. Coordination between members is minimal, and this kind of management is characteristic of recreational sport in which everyone decides when, how much and what to do (Lazarević, 2001). In professional, especially top-level sport, this situation is impossible.

Here we will add another management style that can be called *integrative*, which is situationally determined, and which is, in theory, the most acceptable in sport. It relies on the

contingency models (Fiedler, 1967) by which, depending on the situation and the difficulty of the task and opponents, the coach should use procedures of autocratic or democratic management style.

METHOD

This study is an explorative type of study. The sample consisted of 136 participants, 92 team sports athletes and 44 sports officials (sport club managers and coaches from Niš). Of the participants, 113 were male, and 23 were female. The female athletes (23) included in the sample play football while the males play handball (18), basketball (28) and football (23).

For the purposes of this study, the ASE-2 questionnaire was used, which is in the form of a questionnaire on the preferences of management styles, adjusted to the specifics of management in sports clubs. The questionnaire contains three scales with 12 claims. The scales rate preferences of the authoritarian, democratic, and integrative management style. The questionnaire was administered in the form of a five-point Likert scale. Answers were rated with a maximum of 5 for “strongly agree” to a minimum of 1 for “strongly disagree”. Summing up the data from the answers to all the claims, we formed the index for each style, whose size can range from 12 to 60, with higher numbers meaning a higher degree of acceptance of a certain management style.

The aim of the study was to determine if there is a significant difference in terms of the preferences of a particular management style (autocratic, democratic, integrative) in relation to the player status (sports officials or athletes), gender, and type of sport that the male participants practice (football, handball, basketball).

For data processing, we used the significant difference of means.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained results indicate statistically significant differences in the preference of some form of management between men and women and between the male athletes engaged in certain sports. For better viewing, just the arithmetic means, in cases where there is a statistically significant difference, are presented.

Statistically, significant differences in terms of preference of all three management styles *were not* obtained between sports officials (coaches and club managers) and the athletes, indicating that both groups favor the same styles of management. The lack of statistically significant differences between the two sub-samples in terms of preferences for all offered management styles is important because it indicates a common awareness of the role and mode of management in sports organizations. Such uniformity in perception probably helps in the rare occurrence of conflict in the vertical structure (hierarchy) within sports clubs.

Table 1 Means of men and women on the subscale that measures the preference of the democratic management style

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	113	51,9027	5,9499
Female	23	54,2609	3,1365

Table 2 Means of men and women on the subscale that measures the preference of the autocratic management style

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	113	44,4602	5,6597
Female	23	46,3043	4,0501

Considering genders, a *statistically significant difference was found at the 0.05 level* between men and women in terms of preferences of the autocratic and *at the 0.01 level in terms of preferences of the democratic management style*, while in terms of the integrative style differences do not exist. The results show that women prefer the autocratic and democratic style more than the men. These findings can be interpreted as a greater willingness of women involved in sport to adapt to the requirements of different coaches, regardless of their management style.

Table 3 Means of men, football and handball players, on the subscale that measures the preference of the democratic management style

Type of sport	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Football	23	54,2609	3,1365
Handball	18	56,5000	4,1480

There was also a *significant difference between the football and handball players at the 0.05 level, in terms of the preferences of the democratic management style*, while in terms of the autocratic and integrative styles no differences were found. In regard to football players, handball players prefer the democratic management style.

Table 4 Means of men, football and basketball players, on the subscale that measures the preference of the autocratic management style

Type of sport	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Football	23	46,3043	4,0501
Basketball	28	41,7500	5,8476

Table 5 Means of men, football and basketball players, on the subscale that measures the preference of the integrative management style

Type of sport	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Football	23	52,3043	4,5770
Basketball	28	49,0357	5,5809

Table 6 Means of men, football and basketball players, on the subscale that measures the preference of the democratic management style

Type of sport	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Football	23	54,2609	3,1365
Basketball	28	51,2857	5,8743

Between football and basketball players there is a significant difference in terms of all three management styles. At the 0.01 level of significance, football players prefer an autocratic style, and at the 0.05 level, integrative style when compared to basketball players. Also at the 0.05 level of significance, football players prefer a more democratic leadership style when compared to the basketball players. We can conclude that football players generally have a more positive attitude towards management in general, in relation to the basketball players.

Table 7 Means of men, handball and basketball players, on the subscale that measures the preference of the autocratic management style

Type of sport	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Handball	18	47,4444	4,4222
Basketball	28	41,7500	5,8476

Table 8 Means of men, handball and basketball players, on the subscale that measures the preference of the democratic management style

Type of sport	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Handball	18	56,5000	4,1480
Basketball	28	51,2857	5,8743

Regarding handball and basketball players, there is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level in terms of preferences of the autocratic and democratic management styles, while in terms of the integrative management style, a difference between them does not exist. Handball players prefer more both stated styles when compared to basketball players.

The obtained, and non-existent statistically significant differences between men who are engaged in different sports, as well as the mean values obtained for certain subscales of the preferences for different management styles in sports, show that the best-perceived management style is a democratic one, followed by the integrative one, and the worst perceived style is the autocratic one. This result is consistent with most of the earlier studies. What is obvious is the lack of a statistically significant differences when it comes to the integrative management style. Except for one significant difference (between football and basketball players), no significant difference was determined even between men and women, or between managers and athletes, nor between handball and basketball players, not even between handball and football players. These results suggest the commonality and acceptance of the integrative management style, which favors the situational and contingency models of leadership.

CONCLUSION

The starting point of this study was the fact that management and leadership in sports groups play a major role in the group dynamics, and thus on the effectiveness of the results. The aim of the study was to investigate how the athletes of different gender and type of sport practiced, and their managers, perceive the use of different classically defined management styles. The results showed a difference in the preference of the management styles for men and women, as well as men who are engaged in different sports, but also a

lack of difference between the athletes and their managers. Of all the management styles, the integrative style showed the least differences in almost all sub-samples. This indicates that this research can be considered as a kind of a pilot study drawing attention to the answers that successful management of sports clubs is hidden within the framework of situational and contingency models. The study should be expanded by the inclusion of individual athletes and their managers, with mandatory control of certain factors that may be assumed to moderate the relationship between the application of a particular management style and satisfaction and performance of the members of sports teams: the level of competition, the success of the current results, team cohesion, etc.

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STILOVI RUKOVOĐENJA U SPORTU

Sportski tim predstavlja formalnu grupu pred koju se postavljaju određeni zadaci. Jedan od značajnijih parametara grupnih odnosa jeste i rukovođenje. Ranija istraživanja su pokazala vezu između stilova rukovođenja u sportskoj organizaciji i pojedinih karakteristika sportista. Cilj ovog istraživanja jeste utvrđivanje da li postoji značajna razlika u pogledu preferencije određenog stila rukovođenja (autokratski, demokratski, integrativni) u odnosu na to da li su ispitanici sportski radnici ili aktivni sportisti, kog su pola i kojom vrstom sporta se bave muški ispitanici (fudbal, rukomet, košarka). Uzorak je sačinjavalo 136 ispitanika, od čega je 92 sportista koji se bave kolektivnim sportovima i 44 sportska radnika (rukovodioci i treneri niških klubova)U pogledu polne strukture 113 ispitanika je bilo muškog pola, a 23 ženskog. Najvažniji rezultati istraživanja jesu da ne postoji statistički razlika u pogledu preferencije različitih stilova rukovođenja između sportskih radnika i aktivnih sportista, te da žene preferiraju i autokratski i demokratski stil više u odnosu na muškarce. Ustanovljene su razlike između sportista koji se bave različitim kolektivnim sportovima, a u okviru preferencije integrativnog stila rukovođenja razlike su najmanje zastupljene.

Ključne reči: sportski tim, stil rukovođenja, pol, vrste sportova.