

Research article

Leadership Preferences of Adolescent Players in Sport: Influence of Coach Gender

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Abstract

The authors investigated the coaching behavior preferences and the relationships of these preferences with variables such as gender, type of sport, playing experience, competitive level, and coach gender among young athletes in the national badminton league. Participants were 167 elementary and high school badminton players (91 girls and 76 boys; age range = 9–18 years; $M = 13.5$ ($SD = 2.22$) years) competing in the badminton event of a national league. Players' preferences for coaching behavior were measured using athlete preference version of the LSS to evaluate the five dimensions of leadership behavior in a sporting context. Notably, young athletes strongly preferred training and instruction, followed by positive feedback, democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behavior. An interaction effect of athlete and coach gender on the leadership dimensions of democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support was found. Male athletes with female coaches preferred more democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support behavior than did those with male coaches. Conversely, female players with male coaches favored more democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support than did those with female coaches. This study provides valuable insight into understanding the dynamics of sport leadership environments among young athletes, and how crucial is the role of coach's gender in the athlete-coach dyad interaction.

Key words: Asian athletics, badminton, individual sport, Leadership Scale for Sport, coach leadership style.

Introduction

Participation in sports has become an important doorway to higher education for students throughout the world. The Philippines, a country in Southeast Asia, has established a national annual multi-sport competition (called *Palarong Pambansa*) for elementary through high school students from 18 regions of the country, organized and supervised by the Department of Education (2016). For young student athletes, participating in this highly prestigious sporting event as their region's sport delegate is a milestone in their athletic career that many aspire to. To qualify as a regional delegate, a player must compete at several levels, including school intramurals and congressional district, provincial, and regional athletic meets. These preliminary meets require considerable preparation, both physical and psychological, for which student athletes greatly rely on their coaches.

Coaches provide student athletes with quality training to develop their physical, technical, and tactical

skills and capabilities and encourage them to achieve increasingly greater sports performance. During this process of preparation and competition, how coaches allocate roles and responsibilities to their athletes influences the overall culture of the sporting environment and helps them to achieve competitive advancement. Thus, coaches should practice an appropriate leadership style because it can have a significant impact on the performance and psychological well-being of players (Horn, 1992).

Furthermore, coaches should understand and be aware of the coaching preferences of athletes, especially if they are going to supervise those qualified regional players, whom they would only guide for a brief period of time as the team's official coach. In badminton for instance, once the regional final is completed, athletes who won their respective events shall immediately prepare and train as a team for some time under the supervision of the coaches designated by the regional association. According to the rule of the regional organization for badminton, coaches of the winning players in singles event shall be the official coaches of the entire team. These coaches are responsible for the athletes' training preparations and lead the team and each members to win the overall and individual championships respectively. In order to achieve these goals in such a short amount of time, it is vital for a coach to recognize first each team member's potential and circumstances since majority of these athletes are not under the official coach's personal coaching jurisdictions prior to his/her appointment. In essence, the way players interact and conduct themselves in practice and/or competition may vary depending on how leadership behaviors being displayed by the coach for a particular situation match the coaching styles the players want their coach to display to them. By doing so, coaches can adjust their leadership behaviors to comply with athletes' preferences and characteristics, thus possibly improving the coach-athlete relationship and athletes' long-term involvement in athletics and their sports performance.

Lastly, examining sport leadership particularly coaching behaviors and the various factors influencing them would impart fundamental knowledge and awareness to school administrators, trainers, coaches, and athletes in the Philippines and also provide valuable information to the current sports academic literature, particularly to the local scientific community wherein empirical evidence related to sport leadership is still nonexistent.

Multidimensional model of sport leadership

Effective leadership behavior in a sporting context can be

explained according to an interaction between athletes' characteristics and situational constraints (Chelladurai, 2007; Weiberg and Gould, 2015), an approach called the *multidimensional model of sport leadership*. This model was developed by Chelladurai (2007), and claims that athletes' satisfaction and performance are predicated on three states of leader behaviors: required, actual, and preferred. All three states are directly influenced by various antecedent conditions such as the characteristics of the situation, leader, and member, as well as their interactions.

To supplement the multidimensional model of sport leadership, the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS; Chelladurai and Saleh, 1978) was developed in determining sport specific coaching behaviors. The LSS is one of the most commonly used questionnaires for assessing sport leadership, which comprises five subscales representing different features of coaching behavior: (1) training and instruction behavior, which describes the sport skill and tactical instructional style of the coach, which are aimed at improving athletes' performance; (2) democratic and (3) autocratic behaviors, which refer to the decision-making style of the coach; and (4) social support and (5) positive feedback, which characterize the motivational style of the coach.

Antecedents of leadership

Drawing on the multidimensional model (Chelladurai, 1980), researchers have identified a variety of sociocultural factors that appear to influence the preferred leadership behaviors of athletes, including gender (Chelladurai and Saleh, 1978; Chia et al., 2015; Coykendall, 2014; Sherman et al., 2000; Terry, 1985; Witte, 2011), age or maturity (Chelladurai and Carron, 1983; Hastie, 1993; Martin et al., 1999; Weinberg and Gould, 2015), type of sport (Coykendall, 2014; Terry, 1985; Terry and Howe, 1984; Weinberg and Gould, 2015; Witte, 2011), and level of competition (Beam et al., 2004; Hastie, 1995; Terry, 1985). The findings regarding these factors are somewhat mixed, however. For instance, Hastie (1995) found that young female athletes preferred a coach that exhibited less autocratic and more positive feedback behavior compared to boys, whereas Sherman et al. (2000) showed no overall gender differences in coaching preferences. Martin et al. (1999) noted that players in their early (10–13 years old) and late adolescence (14–17 years old) favored coaches that engaged more in training and instruction, positive feedback, and democratic behavior, and less autocratic behavior, whereas Hastie (1993) found an increasing trend for preferring autocratic behavior among high school players (15–18 years old) as they aged.

Aside from athletes' personal characteristics, the type of sport they play has been found to influence their leadership preferences. Witte (2011), for instance, reported that democratic behavior, positive feedback, training and instruction, situational considerations, and social support were preferred significantly more by athletes of individual sports than by athletes of team sports, whereas the latter athletes favored autocratic behavior. Similarly, Terry and Howe (1984) showed that interdependent sports athletes preferred less democratic behavior and more

autocratic behavior than did athletes in independent sports, but there were no significant differences in preferred leadership behaviors according to task variability (open vs. closed sports). Hastie (1995) also found that high division players preferred more social support and less positive feedback from their coaches compared to low division players, whereas Beam et al. (2004) found no significant differences in leadership behavior preferences between NCAA Division I and Division II student athletes. Finally, Riemer and Toon (2001) found that social support behavior was preferred by athletes with a male coach compared to those with a female coach, which suggests that coach's gender may have an important contribution to leadership preference. Unfortunately, there have been a lack of studies done subsequent to this one and therefore warrants further investigation.

Given these conflicting results, the interaction effects of situational and member characteristics on preferred coaching behavior remain unclear and seemingly complex. The lack of a clear pattern of results for these variables might be attributed to the differences in the sports studied, such as their varying task and situational attributes (e.g., task variability and task dependence) and organizational climate (Riemer and Chelladurai, 1995). Other possible factors for the mixed outcomes could be the use of participants with different demographics and situational attributes, such as task environment, sport playing experience, and coach gender (Riemer and Toon, 2001). For example, Riemer and Toon (2001) contended that the varied results in terms of why male and female athletes differ in their leadership preferences might have been partly influenced by the gender of the athlete's coach as a confounding variable. They argued that when one previous study found females preferred less social support behavior than men (Chelladurai and Saleh, 1978), the female participants could have envisioned a male coach when answering the items and thereby showed disinterest to receive support and concern outside the playing environment from their coach compared to male players (Riemer and Toon, 2001). They also speculated that coach's gender would inevitably affect leadership preferences if the gender of the coach, to a certain extent, knows the types of leadership behaviors they display to their athletes. This notion was based on the suggestion that athletes might adjust their leadership behavior preferences similar to the behaviors displayed by the coach (Riemer and Chelladurai, 1995).

To avoid these possible confounds, it would help to investigate a single sport wherein we can control for other situational behaviors that might influence coaching behavior preferences while investigating the effects of the various antecedents described above. One option is a sport competition featuring only the top players in a given division who can compete in events with contrasting task dependency (singles, doubles, or both), such as the badminton event of the *Palarong Pambansa*. Badminton is generally considered an individual sport. Additionally, the majority of previous studies were conducted with adults, particularly collegiate players, with limited attention being paid to the coaching behavior dynamics of youths (e.g., elementary student athletes). Therefore, the purpose

of the present study was to identify and compare young athletes' coaching leadership preferences based on gender, task dependency, playing experience, level of competition, and coach's gender, and to determine any relationships between these socio-cultural variables and coaching behavior preferences of athletes.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 167 elementary and high school badminton players (91 girls and 76 boys; age range = 9–18 years; $M = 13.5$ ($SD = 2.22$) years) competing in the 2015 *Palarong Pambansa* badminton event. The athletes represented 18 regions throughout the country and played singles, doubles, or both types of games. Playing experience of the players ranges from 1 to 12 years (mean = 4.66) while the number of years they have been part of the team (as qualified regional representatives) ranges from 1 month to 12 years (mean = 1.88). Majority of them ($n = 101$) were supervised by the official regional coaches for either less than 6 months ($n = 91$) or 7–12 months ($n = 20$). While the remaining athletes had experienced to be with their official coaches for either 13–24 months ($n = 16$) or more than 2 years ($n = 40$).

Instrumentation

Various demographic and sport-related characteristics of the athletes were obtained, including their gender, school division, playing experience, badminton event (singles, doubles, or both), and coach's gender. Task dependency was operationalized as badminton event, with participants in the singles event being considered independent, those in the doubles event being considered interdependent, and those participating in both events being considered a combination of the two.

Players' preferences for coaching behavior were measured using athlete preference version of the LSS. The LSS is a 40-item questionnaire developed by Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) to evaluate the five dimensions of leadership behavior in a sporting context (i.e., training and instruction, democratic, autocratic, social support, and positive feedback). For the athlete preference version of the LSS, all items are prefixed with the phrase "I prefer my coach to..." Participants answer each item in terms of frequency on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5; the response options were quantified to increase certainty about the answers: 1 = never; always; 2 = seldom (about 25% of the time); 3 = occasionally (about 50% of the time); 4 = often (i.e., about 75% of the time); and 5 = always. Higher scores indicate a greater preference for a behavior and lower scores indicate a lower preference. Preference scores are calculated for each subject by calculating the mean of the item scores in each subscale.

Tests were performed to determine the internal reliability and validity scores of the athlete's preference version of the LSS. Results of the correlation matrix for the five leadership dimensions ranged from -0.533 – 0.412 showing moderate correlation. Internal consistency was verified through estimating Cronbach's alpha levels. The alpha coefficients for each of the five dimensions are

as follows: training and instruction ($\alpha = 0.967$; 13 items); democratic ($\alpha = 0.918$; 9 items); autocratic ($\alpha = 0.733$; 5 items); positive feedback ($\alpha = 0.913$; 5 items); and social support ($\alpha = 0.880$; 8 items) and were deemed acceptable as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Therefore, further investigation relating to the underlying variables deemed necessary as part of the data analysis process.

Procedure

Data were collected over 7 days during the badminton event of the 2015 *Palarong Pambansa*. The data collection process followed the steps below:

1. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was approved by the organizing body of the competition.
2. The coaches from each region were contacted and asked for their permission to administer the survey to their players.
3. Informed consent to participate or permission for the player to participate was obtained from players and authorized representative respectively.
3. After receiving their permission, the researcher approached the players either individually or as a group and explained the objectives and other details of the study
4. Administered the questionnaire to each athlete. The questionnaire comprised a description of the study, a consent form, and the LSS. The players were advised to complete the questionnaire at their convenience while still at the event and then return it to the researcher. Any questions or clarifications from the players about the study were answered by the researcher.
5. Collected the forms from players.

Data analysis

One-way and two-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were used to compute for the main effects and two-way interaction effects for the five independent variables respectively. Wilk's Lambda was used as the multivariate test of significance and subsequent individual ANOVAs were also performed to determine the sources of the significance. The significance level of the inferential statistics was set to $p < 0.05$.

Results

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of players' coaching behavior preferences according to their gender, competition level, event type, playing experience, and coach's gender. The results of the one-way MANOVAs indicated statistical significance based on the coach's gender of the athlete, Wilks' Lambda = 0.917, $F(5,161) = 2.912$, $p = 0.015$ partial $\eta^2 = 0.083$. However univariate analyses did not show any statistical significance in the five leadership dimensions.

According to the MANOVA results, of the various two-way interactions among the predictor variables, only that between gender and coach gender was significant, Wilks' Lambda = 0.883, $F(5,159) = 4.231$, $p = 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.117$. Subsequent univariate analyses revealed Gender \times Coach Gender interaction effects for

Table 1. Group means (standard deviations) for preferred coaching behavior.

Group	Group	n	TI	Demo	Auto	SS	PF
Total		167	4.47 (1.03)	3.93 (.88)	3.59 (.87)	3.88 (.83)	4.07 (.99)
Gender	Boys	76	4.45 (1.02)	3.95 (.92)	3.66 (.91)	3.92 (.88)	4.05 (.97)
	Girls	91	4.48 (1.04)	3.92 (.85)	3.54 (.84)	3.85 (.80)	4.08 (1.01)
	Sig.		.869	.826	.400	.583	.840
Competition level	Elementary	78	4.42 (1.10)	3.85 (.98)	3.53 (.97)	3.86 (.88)	4.08 (.98)
	High School	89	4.51 (.96)	4.01 (.79)	3.65 (.78)	3.90 (.79)	4.05 (1.00)
	Sig.		.571	.239	.372	.772	.831
Task dependency	Singles only	36	4.63 (.94)	4.08 (.84)	3.79 (.90)	4.08 (.78)	4.19 (.89)
	Doubles only	31	4.46 (.97)	3.99 (.80)	3.56 (.76)	3.80 (.80)	3.98 (.96)
	Both	100	4.41 (1.07)	3.86 (.92)	3.53 (.89)	3.83 (.86)	4.05 (1.04)
Sig.		.555	.391	.312	.252	.670	
Playing experience	1–3 years	60	4.48 (1.02)	3.90 (.88)	3.56 (.90)	3.89 (.84)	4.13 (.90)
	4–6 years	67	4.35 (1.13)	3.84 (.95)	3.57 (.90)	3.83 (.87)	3.90 (1.16)
	≥7	38	4.64 (.84)	4.11 (.75)	3.64 (.80)	3.92 (.78)	4.25 (.79)
Sig.		.376	.303	.907	.856	.177	
Coach Gender	Male	87	4.46 (1.04)	3.93 (.91)	3.71 (.91)	3.91 (.86)	3.99 (1.04)
	Female	80	4.47 (1.02)	3.93 (.85)	3.47 (.82)	3.85 (.81)	4.15 (.93)
	Sig.		.976	.989	.081	.651	.316

TI = training and instruction; Demo = Democratic behavior; Auto = Autocratic behavior; SS = Social support; PF = Positive feedback. 1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = occasionally; 4 = often; 5 = always.

Table 2. Leadership Preferences based on Athlete's and Coach's Genders. Data are means (standard deviations).

Athlete	Coach	n	TI	Demo	Auto	SS	PF
Boy	Male	45	4.34 (1.11)	3.78 (.96)	3.61 (.91)	3.77 (.89)	3.91 (1.07)
	Female	31	4.61 (.87)	4.19 (.81)	3.72 (.92)	4.13 (.83)	4.24 (.78)
Girl	Male	42	4.59 (.95)	4.09 (.84)	3.80 (.90)	4.06 (.81)	4.08 (1.02)
	Female	48	4.38 (1.11)	3.77 (.84)	3.31 (.73)	3.66 (.74)	4.09 (1.02)
Sig.			.138	.009*	.029*	.004*	.307

TI = training and instruction; Demo = Democratic behavior; Auto = Autocratic behavior; SS = Social support; PF = Positive feedback. 1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = occasionally; 4 = often; 5 = always. * $p < 0.05$.

the democratic [$F(1,163) = 6.92, p = 0.009$ partial $\eta^2 = 0.041$] autocratic [$F(1,163) = 4.83, p = 0.029$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.029$], and social support [$F(1,163) = 8.76, p = 0.004$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.051$] subscales. Specifically, boys with female coaches preferred more democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support behavior than did those with male coaches. Conversely, girls with male coaches favored more democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support than did those with female coaches (Table 2).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to identify and compare young athletes' coaching leadership preferences based on gender, task dependency, playing experience, level of competition, and coach's gender, and to determine any relationships between these selected variables and coaching behavior preferences of athletes. One-way multivariate analyses of variance showed that coaching preferences of athletes did not differ based on all examined independent variables. On the other hand, two-way MANOVAs showed a Gender x Coach Gender interaction effects on democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support.

Overall, adolescent athletes show the greatest preference for training and instruction behavior, followed by positive feedback, democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behavior. Interestingly, the magnitudes of the preference scores for all dimensions were fairly high among all the variable groups, with all mean scores being

above 3.50; this suggests that adolescent badminton players prefer their coaches to demonstrate leadership behaviors of training and instruction "almost always", positive feedback "often", democratic behavior and social support "frequently", and autocratic "occasionally". Interestingly, the high mean scores for autocratic behavior imply that the young badminton athletes in this study did not mind coaches occasionally taking over as primary decision-makers and exhibiting authority. This is in contrast to previous studies, wherein players tended not to favor autocratic behavior from coaches (with mean score ranges of 1.69 to 2.75 using the LSS). Thus, future research is needed to identify the degree of contribution of autocratic behavior in the sport leadership model, especially since a meta-analysis found an overall positive relationship between autocratic behavior and satisfaction (Kim and Cruz, 2016).

Gender

Both boys and girls showed the greatest preference for training and instruction behavior, followed by positive feedback, democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behavior. These results were similar to the results of Terry (1985), Chelladurai and Saleh (1978), and Chia et al. (2015) and partially accorded with Witte (2011) and Hastie (1995), who only found a different rank order for the 3rd and 4th dimensions (i.e., social support preceded democratic behavior for them).

It was found that boys preferred democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behaviors more than did girls, whereas girls preferred training and instruction

and positive feedback more than did boys. These differences were not, however, significant. These results contrast with those of previous studies showing significant gender differences in positive feedback, social support, and autocratic leadership behaviors (Chelladurai and Saleh, 1978; Hastie, 1995; Terry, 1985; Witte, 2011) but support the findings of Terry (1984) and Sherman et al. (2000), who also showed no gender disparities. Nevertheless, the outcomes provide additional support to the notion that male and female players are more similar than they are different in terms of their preferences for coaches' behaviors (Plaisted, 1995).

Playing experience

The leadership preferences were rather similar across the different playing experience groups, with training and instruction being most preferred, followed by positive feedback, democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behavior. Previous studies revealed increasing preference for autocratic behavior and social support as players aged or athletically matured (Hastie, 1993; Weinberg and Gould, 2015). The study revealed a slight increasing trend for the autocratic behavior dimension as playing experience increased (Hastie, 1993), but there was no change in social support.

Task dependency

For the three badminton events, training and instruction was preferred most, followed by positive feedback, democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behavior. As with the two above variables, there were no significant differences between the groups. Our results contradict Terry and Howe (1984), who found significant differences between independent and interdependent sports in democratic and autocratic behavior. However, it should be noted that Terry and Howe (1984) and this study found a similarly strong preference for positive feedback in independent (singles event) players than in the interdependent (doubles event) players. Given these differences in outcomes, further investigation is needed to understand the sport leadership dynamics in terms of task dependency, particularly in young athletes.

Competition level

In terms of the competition level, elementary and high school players both primarily preferred coaches to exhibit training and instruction behavior, followed by positive feedback, democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behavior but no substantial differences were observed between groups.

These findings challenge previous studies (Hastie, 1995; Terry 1985) that found significant differences for democratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback between competitive levels. However, these past studies showed a similar pattern of leadership preferences as we found. In contrast, like our study, Beam et al. (2004) did not find a significant difference in any of the leadership dimensions but positive feedback was rated as more important than training and instruction.

Coach gender

Adolescent athletes with male and female coaches most preferred training and instruction behavior, followed by positive feedback, democratic behavior, social support, and autocratic behavior. Again, while there were no significant differences, athletes with male coaches favored more autocratic behavior and social support than did players with female coaches, whereas the latter preferred training and instruction and positive feedback more than did the former. Both groups equally preferred democratic behavior.

Knowledge about how coach gender influences coaching behavior preferences is still somewhat lacking, especially among youth athletes (Hastie, 1993, 1995). For instance, in one study by Hastie (1993) about the coaching preferences of high school girl volleyball players, he found no significant main effect between the coach gender on any of the leadership subscales. Although a similar result was obtained in the current study, we cannot completely compare the two studies because Hastie (1993) included only female participants playing in a team sport. Furthermore, Hastie (1993) did not disclose detailed information about coaching preferences based on the gender of the coach and the total number and ratio of female to male coaches. Therefore, it remains difficult to draw conclusions concerning the influence of coach gender on sport leadership preference among young athletes, indicating the need for further research.

Two-way interaction effects

An interaction effect of athlete and coach gender on democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support coaching dimensions was observed. Specifically, male players with female coaches tended to prefer democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, and social support behavior more than did those with male coaches. Conversely, female players with male coaches showed greater preferences for these types of behavior than did those with female coaches. Furthermore, while the interaction effect did not reach statistical significance for training and instruction and positive feedback, a similar pattern of results was observed for these subscales. Taken together, the findings suggest that degree of athletes' leadership preferences are greater for an opposite-gender coach than for a similar-gender coach.

For the democratic leadership dimension, the higher preference for democratic behavior of female players under the supervision of male coaches as well as male athletes with female coaches might be attributed to athlete's attitudes and preferences for female and male coaches (Kalin and Waldron, 2015; Parkhouse and Williams, 1986; Weinberg et al., 1984). For instance, Parkhouse and Williams (1986), showed that female and male athletes perceived male coaches to be more knowledgeable in coaching, capable to motivate, likely to achieve success, and more desirable to play for than female coaches. Moreover, 71% of female athletes and 89% of male athletes preferred a male coach. In the current study, it is likely that the positive outlook of the female badminton athletes for male coaches tend to prefer higher degrees of coaching behaviors associated to these perceptions especially that their main goal is to achieve high-

level performance. Conversely, male athletes who wanted their female coaches to display more democratic leadership might be due to gender stereotype about leadership styles of women. That is, women leaders have a tendency to employ a more democratic style and a less autocratic style than men (Eagly and Johnson, 1990).

For the autocratic leadership dimension, the results indicate that female athletes with male coaches preferred more autocratic behavior than female athletes with female coaches. Moreover, male athletes with female coaches preferred more autocratic behavior compared with male athletes with male coaches. Differences in psychological characteristics of the players and preference for autocratic behaviors and athlete's attitude towards male and female coaches discussed earlier may explain these findings. Previous studies showed a connection between athletes' psychological characteristics and their preferred coaching behaviors (Horn et al., 2011; Weinberg and Gould, 2015). For example, athletes with external locus of control preferred more autocratic behavior than athletes with internal locus of control. Locus of control is a concept that differentiate individuals who considered their fate is determined either by their own personal control or by luck, chance, or powerful others (Rotter, 1966; Levenson, 1981). Thus, it is probable that athletes who preferred more autocratic style of leadership were individuals with external locus of control and considered their coaches as "powerful others" who can help them succeed. On the other hand, since male athletes have fairly strong prejudice against females in sports and coaching (Parkhouse and Williams, 1986; Weinberg et al., 1984) and greater preference for autocratic behaviors (Chelladurai and Saleh, 1978; Terry, 1985), male badminton players with female coaches may have wanted their coaches to possess perceived qualities of male coaches and consequently would express much preference for coaching behaviors related to such characteristics.

Lastly, for the social support dimension, the results show that female athletes with male coaches preferred more social support behavior than female athletes with female coaches. Moreover, male athletes with female coaches preferred more social behavior compared with male athletes with male coaches. The current findings might be explained once again by the psychological characteristics of the athletes. Chelladurai and Carron (1981) found that highly spontaneous athletes showed greater preference for social support behaviors from their coaches than less spontaneous players. In addition, extrinsically motivated and affiliation-oriented athletes preferred more social support behaviors from coaches compared to their counterparts (Erle, 1981).

These findings provide support for Chelladurai's model (1978) that member characteristics and situational factors, would determine coaching behavior preference (Weinberg and Gould, 2015) and at the same time present important evidence for the role of coach gender in determining how athlete's gender influences their coaching preferences. This role was previously pointed out by Riemer and Toon (2001), who found significant effect of coach's gender on social support and suggested that coach's gender, rather than athlete's gender, was the main

factor responsible for the variance in leadership preferences. Moreover, because coach's gender was a determining factor for leadership behavior preference, this outcome also offers support to the concept of relational demographics (Bauer and Green, 1996).

Conclusion

Overall, our findings indicate that athletes in this sample population prefer their coaches to demonstrate leadership behaviors of training and instruction "almost always", positive feedback "often", democratic behavior and social support "frequently", and autocratic "occasionally". Interestingly, while each independent variable did not show any significant differences between groups, an interaction was observed for athlete gender and coach gender on autocratic, democratic, and social support leadership preferences. This result provide valuable information on the dynamics of the sport leadership environment in young players and how crucial the role of coach's gender is for the athlete-coach dyad interaction (Norman, 2015) and leadership style preference (Riemer and Toon, 2001). Moreover, to our knowledge, this investigation is the first to provide empirical evidence on sport leadership preferences in the Philippines.

It should be noted that the current investigation was conducted exclusively for a single sport. Also, participants were limited to adolescent athletes with a Southeast Asian background. Indeed, generalizability of results is limited but these study sample conditions were viewed important because previous researches have shown mixed results in preferred coaching behaviors as a function of some member and situational variables, particularly the effect of gender on leadership preferences. That is, any observed gender differences in coaching behavior preferences may be confounded by other factors in the sport or social environment and/or that any significant differences are outweighed by similarities in preferences between males and females (Horn et al., 2011; Riemer and Toon, 2001; Sherman et al., 2000). Thus, applying these outcomes to other sports and participants in Western countries should be taken with caution.

For future research, since the study only included young participants, it would be noteworthy to compare coaching preferences between young and adult athletes since age has shown to influence leadership preferences (Chelladurai and Carron, 1983; Hastie, 1993; Martin et al., 1999; Weinberg and Gould, 2015). Furthermore, it might be interesting to explore the congruity between preferred coaching behaviors of athletes and actual behaviors of coaches and if these variables are related to performance improvement and/or satisfaction of players.

The information provided above can serve as a focal point for badminton coaches. In other words, to align with players' preferences, they should provide ample training and instruction behavior aimed enhancing their players' physical condition and tactical and technical knowledge of sports as well as show concern for individual athletes and create a positive atmosphere, which together might lead to greater sport performance and satisfaction. Additionally, at least among badminton players,

coaches who display autocratic style of leadership such as being strict and asserting authority during practice and competitions are still favored. Surprisingly, this idea conflicts with the notion of coaching youth athletes in general and Filipino badminton youth players in particular, where implementation of an autocratic leadership style is often believed to be detrimental to young athletes and should be avoided as much as possible. Likewise, school sport administrators might make sure that coaches are properly aware of athletes' preferred coaching behaviors to prevent coach-athlete relationship problems, which might influence the athletes' performance. Finally, when hiring coaches, administrators might consider proper player-coach gender matching to ensure an appropriate coaching environment for players.

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Key points

- The gender of the coach is an important factor what coaching behaviors are preferred by young male and female athletes, particularly democratic, autocratic and social support behaviors.
- Young badminton athletes preferred their coaches to show autocratic coaching behaviour occasionally.
- First to provide basic knowledge on sport leadership preferences in the Philippines.

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