

Lopez, Y. P., Dohrn, S., & Posig, M. (2019, July 19). The effect of abusive leadership by coaches on Division I student-athletes' performance: The moderating role of core self-evaluations. *Sports Management Review*, 23(1), 130-141. doi: 10.1016/J.SMR.2019.07.001

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Summary

Literature Review: This article focuses on the relationship between Division I coaches and athletes and how this relationship directly affects many areas of athletes' lives. In particular, the study examines how abusive leadership affects an athlete's performance in his or her sport. It is crucial to explore the negative impacts faced by student-athletes under abusive leaders exhibiting aggressive or punitive behaviors because these behaviors greatly affect athletes, in particular, student-athletes. The researchers specifically used performance evaluations, known as core self-evaluations, to monitor athlete's feelings about their coaches and their coaching behaviors. Core self-evaluations theory was then used to interpret results. Core self-evaluations represent a stable personality trait that encompasses a person's subconscious, fundamental evaluations and instinctive judgements of themselves, their own abilities, and their own control. These evaluations expand beyond athletic performance to also explore an athlete's feelings as well as psychological and emotional well-being. In this instance, the researchers looked at student-athletes and how core self-evaluations played a role in their perceptions of their performance under their coaches' behavioral leadership.

The researchers sought to discover if core self-evaluations moderated the negative relationship between abusive leadership and student-athlete performance. In particular, the researchers wanted to know if a coach's abusive leadership would negatively impact a student-athlete's performance. They were interested in the results of these core self-evaluations to see if an athlete with a higher, rather than lower, core self-evaluation would view negative leadership as less significant than those with lower core self-evaluations. Furthermore, the researchers were desperate to understand if women, rather than men, would have lower levels of core self-evaluations, thus greater impacting their performance. The main reason the researchers focused on using core self-evaluations was because typically those who have significantly lower performance evaluations tend to view abusive coaches as having a less desirable communication style, a less favorable communicator image, and less expertise, resulting in less satisfaction with their coach and personal self-concept.

Method: The study was conducted through DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, with the approval of using human subjects. Researchers specifically used 216 student-athletes from every team at a Division I intercollegiate institution to study. Of these respondents, each was given one of two surveys, creating an even split of 108 members taking each survey. The first survey focused on negative coaching behavior and the second survey focused on positive coaching behavior. Through such surveys and the large sample of participants, the researchers collected quantitative data. Statistical analyses were used to analyze the found data, helping the researchers test predictions and attempt to find the objective truth, allowing them to come to the following conclusions.

Discussion: The researchers discovered and discussed how core self-evaluations provided a buffering effect on the negative impact of coaches' abusive leadership on student-athlete performance. As predicted, the negative impact of abusive leadership by coaches reduced when students had higher levels of core self-evaluations. However, even though the negative impact was lessened, for student-athletes with higher, rather than lower, levels of core self-evaluations, all student-athletes experienced a reduction in performance. Therefore, the results indicated that a coach's abusive leadership does, in fact, still hinder athletic performance. In addition, as the one of the three hypotheses suggested, the research noted that women student-athletes reported lower levels of core self-evaluations than men. In turn, this finding is problematic because women, and their athletic performance, could be more greatly affected, if not detrimentally affected by abusive leadership.

In terms of the practical and theoretical implications, these findings are important and should be implemented because if abusive leadership hinders an athlete's performance, it should not be tolerated. Instead, institutions and programs need to look at the welfare of their student-athletes and ban abusive leadership. Continuing to use core self-evaluations would help programs gauge the effectiveness of coaching behavior on athletic performance. Otherwise, equipping coaches, administrators, and students, alike, to understand the detrimental outcomes associated with abusive coaching behavior, providing them with more effective methods of communications, and giving them appropriate coping strategies will help move programs in a more positive, nonabusive direction. In turn, this will help athletes experience less anxiety, depression, and general discontent. Additionally, their sportsmanship, player satisfaction, and performance will increase. Here at St. Norbert College, creating teams defined by their collaborative partnership between coaches and athletes where each party shares joint power and decision making will ultimately eliminate an athlete's long-term distress from abusive leadership and give the individual a better, more positive experience, overall.

Evaluation

Ultimately, the reason I selected this article, in particular, is because I am a student-athlete and have been my whole life. While I attend St. Norbert College, a small Division III college, not a large Division I institution, the concept of abusive leadership can still apply. Growing up, I had the same coach from age eight, just a year after I started the sport of swimming, to age eighteen, when I graduated high school. Needless to say, over this time, Bob Burdorf, more commonly known as Burdy, has become more like a father-figure and mentor to me than just solely a swim coach. So, transferring to a new university and adapting to a new program with a new coach and coaching philosophy has been anything but easy for me. Additionally, I was interested in the article, itself, discussing the relationship between coaches and their athletes and the effect coaching strategies can have on athletes' performance and mental health. Having knowledge of this research makes me want to have a discussion with my current coach and previous coaches, with Burdy, in particular, about the findings and how they see themselves as coaches. With their perspective in mind, we could work together to enhance the programs to better suit athletes' needs, performance goals, and mental health.

The authors clearly articulated their ideas and findings throughout the article. I fully understand and appreciate the conclusions made from the findings, but I think it is important and would be interesting to replicate this study to include more schools, at various levels, and focus on one sports team instead of the majority of sports teams at one university. This way, a variety of different institutions and how these different institutions value coaching in one sport can be analyzed. This is an especially important limitation because in this study, only one singular Division I institution's non-revenue sports teams participated. Therefore, sports such as Men's Football and Basketball were excluded from the study. In addition to adding revenue team participation, for me, in particular, I would love to see this study replicated in the sport of swimming across many universities, being that, I, myself, am a swimmer. Additionally, surveying coaches on assessing athletes' performance and measuring actual performance could enhance future research and reduce bias. I appreciate that this research shed light on abusive leadership in the sport realm because of the drastic effects it can have on student-athletes. This article allows for the conversation to arise and is useful for getting people to discuss abusive leadership and its acceptability at their institution. In general, these findings are most important and should be implemented because if abusive leadership hinders an athlete's performance, it should not be tolerated, at any level, in any sport, whether or not it generates revenue.