

DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP IN FOOTBALL: HOW TO PLAYERS PERCEIVE THEIR COACHES DARK SIDE?

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ABSTRACT

Aim of this study was to investigate how to football players evaluate their coaches destructive leadership actions in relation with players characteristics. All male four hundred and sixteen football players participated and accepted to answer the Destructive Leadership Scale (DLS) (Uymaz, 2013) with a personal information form to get the demographic data. The participants consisted from all senior Turkish leagues including the Super League (n=63), League 1 (n=84), League 2 (n=135) and League 3 (n=134), the mean age was 25.27 (SD=4.31). The players' position in the team were 44 goalkeepers, 134 defensive players, 179 middle field players and 59 offensive players. The six subscale of the DLS compared by league status, age group of players, educational status, working duration (in months) with the current coach, number of worked coaches during the career and the possibility of being in the first 11 players in last 3 months' matches by ANOVA statistics. Before the statistical analyses, reliability coefficients of the DLS checked and there were satisfactory results. There was significant difference on the all six subscales (Excessive authority use, Lack of Leadership Competency, Lack of interest to subordinates, Resistance to technology and change, Unethical behavior and nepotism) comparing with the League Status variable. There was a bipolar distribution where Super League players and League 3 players' subscale scores were mostly higher than League 1 and League 2 players. This result was interpreted as Super League and League 3 players mostly perceive their coaches more destructive than other leagues. Also the players who worked 0-2 years range with their coaches, perceived their coaches more nepotist and in lack of interest with their subordinates than the players who has 3-5 years of working years with their coaches.

Keywords: *Destructive Leadership, Football Coaches, Leadership, Player-Coach Interaction*

INTRODUCTION

Sport settings are generally accepted as complex human interaction grounds. Many studies focused on coaches' leadership skills, because coaches have great influence on their team, and leadership approaches have great effect on performance (Ramzaninezhad & Keshtan, 2009). Leadership is the main description of the effective human interactions. Football is the primary discipline

in team sports where coaching recognizing as the core element in organizations (Bayansalduz, 2012; Gunduz, 2017). Wałach-biśta (2014) mentioned a coach as “a good sports leader who daily provides his athletes with proper technical preparation, providing support and influences their motivation in order to achieve the vision of victory” shortly, effective sports coach is an effective leader (Toros et al., 2013; Can et al., 2009). From this point, coaching is a tough job and can't be count a wholly rational activity (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Yanar et al., 2017), clubs or federation managers expect real victories from them, football coaching is one of the most volatile employment category and even in the Premier League “getting the sack is now part of parcel of being a football coach” (Abdilla, 2017). In this circumstances, high expected achievement, high media interest with negative criticism and high risk for job losing creates a ground for bad leadership actions. One reason is this type of ground comes with destructive outcomes and destructive leadership is often at the heart of many organizations' several losses (Thoroughgood et al., 2012b).

There are different approaches on definitions of destructive leadership in different studies such as toxic behavior (Goldman, 2009), fake transformational leadership, strategically bullying, managerial tyranny (Uymaz, 2013), abusive treatment (Einarsen et al., 2007), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007; Harris et al., 2007), petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994), pseudo transformational leadership, personalized charismatic leadership (Krasikova et al., 2013) represent some different ways of definitions. Leaders' personality traits, actions, rigid authoritarian leadership style, low self evaluation and low self monitoring, manipulating behavior or opportunism, Machiavellianism and cognitive rigidity, (Kiazad et al., 2010), low impulse control and similar behaviors facilitates the common ground of destructive leadership. Many studies meet a number of criterias or committed actions by destructive leaders that uses authority for personal gain, embarrasses subordinates, forcing style of conflict resolution, discouraging subordinates (Ashforth, 1994), sabotaging the organization's goal, tasks, resources and effectiveness, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates (Tran et al., 2013) summarizing similar actions and characteristics of destructive leaders. Leadership is not only a personal experience, “the effectiveness of leaders depends on their relationships with others” (Sheard et al., 2013) and indirectly dependent on how followers perceive a leader's behavior. Coach-athlete relationship is the “common ground” of the leadership process also mentioned as a “complex interaction” (Sophia; Jowett & Chaundy, 2004) and sport setting that refer to coach as a leader and players as followers (Saybani et al., 2013) by the reason, football coaches are natural leaders of their teams. Theoretically good team performance expected to come with ideal coach-athlete relationships. This relationship accepted as one of the key processes in successful executive coaching (Jowett et al., 2012). Jowett's coach-athlete relationship model proposed 3+1 C's as closeness, commitment, complementarity and co-orientation (Sophia; Jowett & Chaundy, 2004) to define the ideal model. Laios et al. (2003) suggested coaches to use leadership power for influence players positively. A negative influence is not desired as explained above and we have enough evidence until now about importance of understand the two dimensions. Focusing coach-athlete relationship

on positive to negative scale of the coaches' leadership performance is a reasonable aspect to inspire researchers for expand scientific knowledge. The aim of this study is to investigate how football players perceive their team coaches as their leader according to destructive leadership behaviors according to the model of Uymaz. Uymaz (2013) developed the Destructive Leadership Scale which consists of six subscales. In sport and especially football area, there is no direct destructive leadership study yet.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

All male football players consist of four different football leagues including Turkish Super League (n=63), League 1 (n=84), League 2 (n=135) and League 3 (n=134) participated in the study and voluntarily filled the personal information form and the Sport Coaching Destructive Leadership Scale. Total number of participants were 416. Age range was between 16 to 36, (mean age=25.27; SD=4.31). Playing positions of the players were 44 goalkeepers, 134 defensive players, 179 middle field players and 59 offensive players. All applications conducted before or after training sessions in the clubs' administrative offices by researchers. Totally 32 filled forms discarded because of empty, double or forgotten choices detected during data handling process.

Instrumentation

The Destructive Leadership Scale (DLS)

The main data gathered via using the modified form of DLS questionnaire which developed by Uymaz (2013). In the original version of the DLS items were designed for managers as leaders, in this edition, instead of managers' term, "coach" term replaced by collaboration with the questionnaire's author Uymaz. The questionnaire consists of 28 items with 6 subscales which are respectively "Excessive authority use" (8 items, CR alpha=.76), "Lack of Leadership Competency" (8 items, CR alpha=.88), "Resistance to technology and change" (3 items, CR alpha=.78), "Lack of interest to subordinates" (3 items, CR alpha=.76), and "Unethical behavior" (4 items, CR alpha=.50) and "nepotism" (2 items, CR alpha=.87), lastly CR alpha score was found.88 for all-items. Given Cronbach Alpha coefficients representing the results in this study sample. In the Uymaz's study (2013), the original questionnaire total Cronbach Alpha coefficient was.95 for development procedure and subscale Cronbach Alpha scores were found between.87 to.97 range. The questionnaire was 5-point likert scale that representing 1=Strongly agree to 5=Strongly disagree.

Personal Information Form

The form applied for collecting individual data which are age, educational level, League status, information on current coach-player duration of working years (transformed into months), player's number of past coaches before who worked together, player's position in the team and the player's rating for the last three months about playing in the first 11 for team in the previous matches.

Data analysis

Both inferential and descriptive statistics were used for the analyses. Descriptive statistics was used for interpretation of final data and computation of means and frequency tables. Inferential statistics methods were used to assess final findings generalization. A kolmogorov-Smirnov one sample test conducted to see the normality distribution of the data and the data distribution variances found not homogeneous while the K-S statistic was varying between 1.632 (the subscale excessive authority use) to 2.976 (the subscale resistance to change and technology) and all K-S statistics were significant at.01 level. Because of the K-S test results, Games-Howell post-hoc test used according to Kayri (2009) in the ONEWAY procedure to compare groups after the F statistic was found significantly different at.05 level. When the homogeneity of variance tests found significant, in order to control type-I error, a Welch statistic calculated and used instead of the F ratio in the result tables, according to Field (2009) to secure the results reliability.

RESULTS

Table 1. General demographical frequency distributions

Variable	Group	Frequency	%
Current league status	Super league	63	15,1
	League1	84	20,2
	League2	135	32,5
	League3	134	32,2
Position in the team	Goalkeeper	44	10,6
	Defence	134	32,2
	Middle field	179	43,0
	Offence	59	14,2
Education status	University degree	33	7,9
	High school	253	60,8
	Primary or secondary education	128	30,8
Age group	22 or lower	115	27,6
	23-27	172	41,3
	28 or higher	129	31,0
Working duration with current coach (months)	0-2 months	127	30,5
	3-5 months	77	18,5
	6 months or higher	212	51,0
Number or coaches during the career	1-8 coaches	196	47,1
	9 or more coaches	220	52,9

Above the demografic distribution based on the main independent variables seen of the participant football players. All subgroups representing by at least enough large samples such as university degree (n=33), and data structure was suitable for the multiple group comparison analysis (Table 1).

In order to analyze the Destructive Leadership Scale subscales between the independent variables, one-way ANOVA statistics used for the variables consist of more than two subgroups, as explained in the method section of the study. Below

given the comparisons with DLS scores between “current league status”, “position in the team”, “educational status” and “age group” variables respectively.

Table 2. *F test results with descriptive statistics for the DLS questionnaire for league status*

DLS subscales	League status	N	Mean	SD	DF1, DF2	F	p	Eta ²
Excessive authority use	Super league	63	3,75	,56	3,198	15,6	.001	.083
	League1	84	3,10	,63				
	League2	135	3,28	,64				
	League3	134	3,36	,72				
Lack of Leadership Competency	Super league	63	3,94	,54	3,198	3,3	.021	.026
	League1	84	3,71	,84				
	League2	135	3,82	,73				
	League3	134	4,02	,70				
Unethical behavior	Super league	62	4,03	,68	3,187	9,4	.001	.067
	League1	84	3,68	,90				
	League2	135	3,83	,75				
	League3	134	4,19	,67				
Resistance to change and technology	Super league	63	3,98	,83	3,186	4,16	.001	.033
	League1	84	3,54	,95				
	League2	135	3,73	,82				
	League3	134	3,90	,75				
Lack of interest to subordinates	Super league	63	3,56	,85	3,197	3,9	.01	.026
	League1	84	3,16	,85				
	League2	135	3,29	,92				
	League3	134	3,52	1,07				
Nepotism	Super league	63	3,23	,96	3,199	5,86	.001	.035
	League1	84	2,57	1,24				
	League2	135	2,71	1,23				
	League3	134	3,02	1,28				

Above as seen on Table 2, significant difference found between league status across all the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire subscale scores. Eta squared statistics given strong effect size values in the “excessive authority use” and “unethical behavior” subscales, other subscales has moderate but satisfied effect size values as seen in the table 2. The Games-Howell post-hoc test results, Super League players perceived their coaches using more excessively their authorities than all other league coaches ($p < .001$). In the same subscale, League 3 players perceived more authority use of their coaches than League 1 players ($p < .001$). On “unethical behavior” subscale Super League players’ scores was higher than the League 1 Players ($p < .05$), also League 3 players scores higher than the League 1 and League 2 players ($p < .001$). The analysis on “resistance to change and technology” subscale, Super League and League 3 players feel their coaches more resistant than League 1 players ($p < .05$). Also the comparison on “lack of interest to subordinates” subscale, Super League and League 3 players feel their coaches less interested than League 1 players (both $p < .05$). On the comparison of “nepotism” subscale, Super League players scores higher more than League 1 players ($p < .01$).

Age group showed a limited effect on the perceived coach destructive leadership behavior on the football teams. Only nepotism subscale was significantly different between age groups. 22 or lower age-group players perceive more nepotism on their coaches than 28 or higher age group ($F_{2,259}=4.207$; $p<.05$). There was no significant difference for the position of players and the education level between the all subscales. Another result was the players who worked 0-2 months' duration with their coaches, perceived them more nepotistic and in lack of interest with their subordinates than the players who has 3-5 months of working time with their coaches.

The independent variables contain less than 3 subgroups examined by independent sample t test, according to the experience of the coaches between DLS subscale comparison results, there was only a significant difference on nepotism subscale, football players perceived 1-8 years experienced coaches were in more nepotism tendency than 9 years or more experienced coaches ($t=2.8$; $df=414$; $p<.01$). There was no difference in all subscales when compared by players' chance to be in the first 11 players in the played matches.

Pearson correlation analysis conducted for the relational status of the six subscales between age,

Table 3. The pearson correlation analyses for continuous variables with six DLS subscales

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age of the player	-								
2. Duration of working time with the current team coach	,182**	-							
3. How many coaches do you worked since beginning this level?	,646**	-,105*	-						
4. Percentage of the match start in first 11 player	,420**	,029	,370**	-					
5. Excessive authority use	,012	,158**	-,068	,024	-				
6. Lack of Leadership Competency	,030	,000	-,043	,013	,415**	-			
7. Unethical behavior	,069	,046	-,026	,074	,344**	,589**	-		
8. Resistance to change and technology	,086	,050	-,003	,025	,388**	,499**	,588**	-	
9. Lack of interest to subordinates	,120*	-,079	-,003	,038	,318**	,306**	,335**	,429**	-
10 Nepotism	-,107*	,018	-,152**	-,003	,422**	,248**	,253**	,271**	,428**

According to the Pearson correlation analyses, the more aged players believes they have a more chance to take part in the first 11 player in the matches ($p<.01$), they believe their coaches as the lack of interest in their subordinates ($p<.05$) and age variable negatively correlated with nepotism subscale ($p<.05$). The players with more duration of working together with their coaches perceived more excessive authority use ($p<.01$). When the players worked in their career with more number of coaches, they perceive their possibility to take part in the first 11 players in the matches ($p<.01$) and they perceive less nepotism behavior of their

coaches. Lastly as an internal consistency coefficient, all subscales of the DLS were positively correlated with other.

DISCUSSION

The main finding of this study was the football players perception of their coaches destructive leadership behavior was asymmetrically distributed when compared with their league statuses. On Excessive authority use and unethical behavior subscales has explained.083 and.067 percent of the variance, and despite the previous expectations, Super League players was given higher scores on the excessive authority use subscale than the other league players. This result might be related with the excessively higher expected achievement environment in the Super League. This result is similar with Turksoy's study on the junior level Turkish football players (2016). According to this study 17, 18 and 19 age group football players perceived their coaches as more autocratic than 16 and 20 aged players, and higher level of players perceive their coaches higher negatively. On his study on the perception of power, Konter (2009) found similar result with our study, younger players have higher perception of referent power than older ones. This perception can have interpreted twofold: the younger players perceptions might be different than older players, or the coaches using more authority and more power on younger players. The League 3 players' scores were significantly higher than the League 1 player's perception. This bipolar tendency explain each different league has unique conditions than other such as the achievement settings, coach behaviors and players interaction with their coaches. A similar non-linear tendency was found on the unethical behavior subscale, Super League players scores were higher than the League 1 players, and League 3 players scores higher than the League 1 and League 2 players. This result supported the non-linear tendency on the leadership behaviors and the football coaches asymmetrically perceived by football players independent from the league status. Another factor and a limitation of our study was, the coaches experience and other characteristics were not evaluated, in some studies such as Bayansalduz et al., (2014) found experienced coaches more service leadership oriented, Toros et al., (2013) also found that basketball coaches training and instruction behavior supported by experience of the coach him/herself. Ramzaninezhad & Keshtan (2009) with a football player sample used the most used leadership scale for sport (LSS) agree on previous study with mentioning "coaches exhibited higher in training and instruction and lower in democratic behavior". Also as a component of the destructive leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2012a; Vella & Crowe, 2010), coach (leader) characteristics possibly have an influence on the perceived coach-leadership interaction. Our aim was not to explore coaching characteristics itself, by the reason this side of the model must be accepted as limitations of the study. The comparison on lack of interest to subordinates subscale by the league status, the similar results found and Super League and the League 3 players perceive their coaches less interested with subordinates than other league players. When explaining the difference in the four leagues DLS scores, the players sub-culture of the several leagues can be an alternative for understanding. Cushion et al., (2006)

emphasizes the sub-cultural structure of the clubs have a strong effect on the coaches leadership.

Another finding was the DLS subscale differences between the working duration of players with their coaches. Due to the results, new players (0-2 months experience with their coach) perceived coaches more nepotistic and more lack of interest with their subordinates than 3-5 months worked players with their coaches. As mentioned before into the introduction, long-term working years is a really rare fact in the football job sector. By the reason players presumably have a short time to get enough impression on their coaches. This result shows even a short time is a starter of the perception on negative coaching leadership, but in time, opinion could change, because in the correlation analyses, duration of the player-coach working time was negatively correlated with the same subscale, but not significant. There are enough evidence for time dimension in leadership interaction, yet in their qualitative study Molan et al., (2016) mentions the importance of the duration of a coaches' working time for effective leadership. Another finding in correlation analysis, when together working duration increased, coaches excessive authority use perceived higher among players. The more number of coaches worked the younger player brings the less perceived nepotism, and brings more belief on being the first 11 players in the matches.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate how football players perceive their coaches destructive leadership tendencies such as excessive authority use, lack of interest with their subordinates and nepotism. The results indicated that football players perceive several destructive leaderships caused by their coaches. League status showed radical differences, and was mostly bipolar distributed, the Super League and League 3 players' beliefs on their coaches were similar in some subscales. Experience of players such as working with more coaches in the career seems give some advantages to cope with negative coaching behaviors. But when players worked with the same coach for longer period, they perceive their coach use his authority more excessively. Lastly, coaches leadership behaviors linked on players' choosing chance in the team as well. As Turner et al., (2012) posits, to reach "a working environment that regarded as desirable and effective", coaches need to regulate their actions and leadership behaviors according to players needs. Following destructive leadership studies in football may focus on coaches situational factors and demographic characteristics to indicate the elements of the destructive leadership behaviors.

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