



Leadership and Management Skills Impacting Sports Educators' Performance in Higher Education Institutions

Zohaib Hassan Sain^{1*}, Amir Karimi²

¹Superior University

²Farhangian University

Corresponding Author: Zohaib Hassan Sain zohaib3746@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how sports educators' leadership and management skills impact their performance in higher education institutions in Pakistan. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 300 sports educators to collect the data. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis were utilized to analyze the findings. The results indicated a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) between leadership skills and performance, identifying leadership as the most significant predictor of educator success ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the reliability of the scales was confirmed by high Cronbach's alpha values ($\alpha = 0.87, 0.82$). This study underscores the importance of developing leadership skills among sports educators to enhance program effectiveness and improve student outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Sports educators in Pakistan's higher education are crucial in promoting physical wellness and athletic excellence (Hussain et al., 2017). They contribute to educational institutions' administration, leadership, and program development, shaping athletic and academic outcomes (Boeren, 2019). Beyond organizing sports events, they mentor students, foster discipline, and encourage holistic development. Their influence extends to building student competencies in leadership, teamwork, and character development (Froberg & Lundvall, 2021).

Research reveals a strong link between educators' attitudes and student outcomes, making their professional conduct vital for effective learning environments (Martua, 2005). Instructors face the challenge of balancing academic rigour with athletic skill, ensuring students benefit from a well-rounded curriculum (Ennis, 2011; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2012). Effective management and leadership in sports education are also integral to developing competent sports managers (Skinner & Gilbert, 2007; Seifried et al., 2021). As sports management evolves, educators' leadership abilities become pivotal in aligning programs with global standards and enhancing institutional effectiveness (Jackson et al., 2022).

Sports educators' leadership skills are essential for resource allocation, budgeting, and fostering a climate conducive to sports advancement (Martin et al., 2003). Leadership influences student outcomes and drives innovation and creativity in the sports sector (Majeed et al., 2019; Hunter et al., 2011). Sports educators' leadership styles and management practices significantly affect student engagement and the effectiveness of sports programs (Ozrudi & Yaghobi, 2015; Scott, 2004). Recognizing their contributions is crucial to strengthening the sports environment in higher education, fostering students' growth in academics and athletics, and fostering a culture of appreciation for their work.

This study addresses the crucial role of sports educators in leadership and management within higher education institutions. While the role of sports in comprehensive development is well recognized, limited research explores how sports educators' leadership and management skills impact their performance and the efficacy of sports programs. The gap lies in understanding the preparedness of sports educators to assume leadership roles, the influence of their management techniques on student sports participation, and the overall effectiveness of the institution. Addressing this research gap is essential to enhancing the role of sports educators in fostering physical skills and promoting leadership, discipline, and collaboration within educational settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of sports educators in higher education has grown, especially regarding leadership and management. Sports educators are responsible for athletic training and play a vital role in cultivating leadership among students and administering sports programs efficiently. According to Retnawati (2023), effective leadership among sports educators is crucial for enhancing athletic outcomes and fostering a holistic development that bridges

sports and academics. The study indicates that the leadership of sports educators strongly impacts the efficacy of sports programs and the overall achievement of student-athletes in both academic and athletic domains. The increasing acknowledgement of the need for leadership development in sports education has compelled institutions to reevaluate their training and preparation of educators for leadership positions.

The leadership styles of sports educators, primarily transformational leadership, have shown an ability to improve student engagement and performance. Transformational leadership empowers instructors to inspire and engage students, fostering a more inclusive and influential sports culture. Egorov and Platonova (2023) highlight that this leadership approach enables educators to create a sense of purpose and belonging among student-athletes, ultimately enhancing their commitment to sporting activities and academic responsibilities. Research demonstrates that sports educators use transformational leadership to enhance student motivation, improving athletic performance and academic success. By using this leadership style, educators may cultivate conditions promoting collaboration, discipline, and resilience among student-athletes, facilitating their comprehensive development (Levin et al., 2021). Levin et al. also emphasize that transformational leadership among sports educators contributes to building emotional intelligence, which is vital for handling the pressures of competitive sports and academic demands.

Sports educators play a crucial role in the strategic administration of sports programs. Efficient administration ensures that athletic programs align with institutional objectives and contribute to the overall development of students. Strategic management in sports education includes planning, resource distribution, and performance assessment. The research underscores the need for educators to have robust management abilities, which are vital for the effective administration of sports programs that benefit both the institution and the students (Jooste et al., 2018). Jooste et al. argue that these management skills include conflict resolution and risk management, which are essential in managing the dynamic nature of sports events and team environments. This underscores the need for ongoing training and support from higher education institutions to ensure that sports educators are prepared to navigate the complexity of contemporary sports management.

The use of technology in sports instruction has gained significant importance, particularly after the COVID-19 epidemic. The pandemic accelerated the integration of digital tools in education, necessitating rapid adaptation by sports educators. Virtual learning platforms, video analysis tools, and digital coaching methodologies have become essential for sports management education. Mulcahy (2019) suggests that integrating these technologies enhances the teaching process and provides a platform for students to develop analytical and self-assessment skills crucial for their sports performance and academic progress. Sports instructors must cultivate digital literacy skills to oversee in-person and remote sports programs proficiently. As technology advances, sports educators need to integrate these technologies into their leadership and management processes (Levin et al., 2021). Moreover,

Levin et al. indicate that digital tools facilitate real-time feedback and data-driven decision-making, which are critical for modern sports management.

The correlation between the management methods of sports educators and student results is well demonstrated. Cheung (2023) identifies that effective management positively influences individual athletic performance and creates a structured environment where students learn to set and achieve personal and team goals. Research indicates that when educators use effective management tactics, student-athletes are more inclined to succeed academically and athletically. These tactics include goal establishment, performance monitoring, and the creation of conducive learning environments that foster student achievement. Effective management also involves recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of student-athletes, thus ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunity for development across all sports disciplines (Bulut-Sahin & Dogu, 2023). Effectively managing the athletic and academic dimensions of a student's growth is an essential competency for sports educators, and institutions are progressively acknowledging the need to offer leadership training for these positions.

The research underscores the complex role of sports educators in higher education, highlighting the significance of leadership and managerial competencies. Sports educators significantly influence the efficacy of sports programs while also contributing essential support to students' academic and personal growth. As sports education evolves, especially with technological integration, sports educators must possess the requisite leadership and management skills to guarantee the success of their students and institutions (Ozsen et al., 2023). Ozsen et al. further emphasize that continuous professional development and reflective practice are necessary for sports educators to adapt to changing educational landscapes and uphold high standards in leadership and management.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study is designed to explore the impact of sports educators' management and leadership skills on their performance and the overall success of sports programs within higher education institutions. This section outlines the research design, sampling methods, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures to achieve the research objectives.

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design, utilizing a cross-sectional survey method. The quantitative approach is suitable because it allows for collecting measurable data, which can be statistically analyzed to identify relationships between variables. Specifically, this study examines the correlation between sports educators' leadership skills and performance, focusing on their influence on sports programs and student outcomes. The study's cross-sectional nature ensures that data is collected at a single point in time, allowing for the identification of patterns and trends across a representative sample of sports educators (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Sampling Strategy

The target population for this research consists of sports educators working in higher education institutions in Pakistan. A stratified random sampling technique will ensure that different regions and institutional types (public and private universities) are adequately represented. The sample size will be determined using Cochran's formula to ensure statistical significance. A sample of approximately 300 sports educators will be selected based on preliminary estimates. Stratified sampling ensures that sports educators from various disciplines and institutional contexts are included, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the research variables (Taherdoost, 2016).

Data Collection Instruments

Data will be meticulously collected using a structured questionnaire specifically designed to comprehensively assess sports educators' leadership, management skills, and performance outcomes. The questionnaire will consist of three main sections:

- **Demographics:** Collects information on participants' age, gender, years of experience, and institutional affiliation.
- **Leadership and Management Skills:** This section will utilize a Likert scale (1 to 5) to measure essential leadership qualities, including transformational leadership, decision-making, and strategic planning, based on established leadership frameworks (Bass & Avolio, 1994).
- **Performance and Outcomes:** This section will measure sports educators' performance using indicators such as student outcomes, the success of sports programs, and their ability to meet institutional goals.

The questionnaire will be piloted with a small sample of 30 sports educators to ensure its validity and reliability before full deployment. Reliability will be tested using Cronbach's alpha, providing the instrument's internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

The primary method of data collection will be through online surveys. An email invitation with a link to the questionnaire will be sent to sports educators across different higher education institutions. Follow-up reminders will be sent to non-respondents after one week to maximise response rates. The survey will be open for responses for one month. All responses will be kept confidential, and participation will be voluntary.

A small subset of the questionnaires will be administered in person for educators without regular access to email or online resources. To ensure adherence to ethical standards, the relevant institutional review board will obtain ethical approval for data collection (Fowler, 2014).

Data Analysis

Once data collection is complete, the quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS. The following analytical techniques will be employed:

- Descriptive Statistics: Mean, median, standard deviation and frequency distributions will summarize the demographic characteristics and responses related to leadership and management skills.
- Inferential Statistics: To test the research hypothesis, a Pearson correlation analysis will assess the strength and direction of the relationship between sports educators' leadership skills and their performance. Additionally, a multiple regression analysis will examine the impact of various leadership skills on specific performance indicators (Field, 2018).
- Reliability Analysis: Cronbach's alpha will be used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, ensuring that the instrument reliably measures the intended constructs (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles will guide the research process to protect participants' rights. All participants will be informed and consented to, and they will be assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. No personal data that could identify participants will be collected. Additionally, the data collected will be stored securely and used exclusively for research purposes (Israel, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics help to summarise and describe the key features of the collected data. This study analysed the demographic characteristics of sports educators and their responses to leadership, management skills, and performance indicators.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Sample (N=300)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Age (Years)	38.2	8.5	25	60
Years of Experience	12.6	5.2	2	30
Leadership and Management Skills (1-5 Likert)	4.1	0.6	2.5	5
Performance of Sports Educators	4.3	0.7	2.8	5

The average age of the sports educators surveyed was 38.2, and they had an average of 12.6 years of experience in their field. Leadership and management skills were rated positively (M = 4.1), and overall performance was also high (M = 4.3). The minor standard deviations suggest consistency in responses.

Inferential Statistics

1. Pearson Correlation

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between sports educators' leadership skills and their performance.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation between Leadership Skills and Performance

Variables	Leadership Skills	Performance
Leadership Skills	1	0.72**
Performance of Sports Educators	0.72**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) between leadership skills and the performance of sports educators. This suggests that higher leadership and management skills are associated with better performance outcomes.

2. Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which leadership and management skills predict the performance of sports educators, controlling for variables like age and years of experience.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis for Predicting Performance

Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value
Leadership and Management Skills	0.65	0.07	0.58	9.29	<0.001
Age	0.08	0.03	0.16	2.53	0.012
Years of Experience	0.05	0.04	0.10	1.25	0.211

The multiple regression analysis showed that leadership and management skills significantly predicted sports educators' performance ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Age was also a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.16$, $p = 0.012$), while years of experience did not have a statistically significant effect on performance ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that leadership skills are the most important factor influencing performance, followed by age.

3. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

To ensure the questionnaire's reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the leadership and management skills and performance scales.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Scale	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Leadership and Management Skills	12	0.87
Performance of Sports Educators	8	0.82

Cronbach's Alpha for the leadership and management skills scale was 0.87, and for the performance scale, it was 0.82. These values indicate high internal consistency and reliability for both scales. A Cronbach's Alpha value

above 0.7 is generally considered acceptable, meaning the measurement instruments were reliable for this study (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research highlights the crucial role of sports educators' leadership and management skills in shaping their overall performance within higher education institutions. The study findings confirm that effective leadership significantly influences the success of sports programs and student outcomes. A strong positive correlation was found between leadership abilities and performance, indicating that sports educators who exhibit transformational leadership tend to manage sports programs better and have more positive student development outcomes. Moreover, multiple regression analysis confirmed that leadership skills are the most critical factor in predicting performance, underscoring the importance of leadership training for educators.

The results of this research suggest that higher education institutions must prioritize the development of leadership and management training programs for sports educators. Empirical evidence supports that leadership development enhances educators' ability to influence student outcomes positively (Retnawati, 2023), and research indicates that structured training in leadership and management can significantly improve sports program effectiveness and student-athlete performance (Levin et al., 2021). Theoretical frameworks, such as transformational leadership theory, further justify the recommendation by highlighting the role of leaders in motivating and fostering growth among their followers (Egorov & Platonova, 2023). By implementing these findings, institutions can improve the overall effectiveness of their sports programs, leading to enhanced student engagement and athletic performance. Additionally, continuous professional development opportunities for sports educators enhance skill acquisition and adaptability, contributing to sports education programs' sustainability and long-term success (Jooste et al., 2018).

In practice, these conclusions emphasize the need for institutional strategies supporting leadership growth among sports educators, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet academic and athletic objectives. Studies demonstrate that leadership development improves self-efficacy, decision-making skills, and collaborative team dynamics (Hunter et al., 2011), essential competencies for fostering a positive sports culture and achieving program goals. Implementing structured leadership development initiatives can foster an environment where sports educators not only improve their performance but also contribute to the broader educational goals of the institution, creating a culture of excellence in sports and academics. This research lays a foundation for further studies to explore the long-term impact of leadership development in sports education. Future research may investigate how leadership training influences long-term student outcomes, such as career readiness, lifelong physical activity habits, and holistic development, across diverse educational contexts (Froberg & Lundvall, 2021; Bulut-Sahin & Dogu, 2023). Understanding the sustained effects of leadership training can provide insights into how

institutions can build resilient sports education programs that continue to evolve and meet the changing needs of students and society.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of sports educators' leadership and management skills on performance and program success in higher education institutions, it also faces certain limitations. One limitation is using a cross-sectional design, which captures data simultaneously and does not allow for observing long-term trends or changes in leadership impact over time. Future research could employ longitudinal studies to track the development of leadership skills and their ongoing effects on educator performance and student outcomes.

Another limitation of this study is its focus on sports educators within a single country, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other geographical or cultural contexts. Future research should explore similar variables in different countries or regions to examine how cultural and institutional differences influence the relationship between leadership, management, and performance in sports education. Additionally, using self-reported data through surveys may introduce response bias, where participants may either overestimate or underestimate their abilities. Further research could incorporate more objective performance metrics, such as student evaluations or institutional performance records, to cross-validate self-reported data.

Exploring the integration of new technologies, such as virtual coaching tools or digital learning platforms, into leadership development for sport educators could also be a promising area for further investigation. By addressing these limitations, future research can build on the findings of this study, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving role of leadership in sports education.

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