

# Athlete' Satisfaction with Coach in Iran's Professional Handball: Based on Power

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the coaches' bases of power and athletes' satisfaction with coach, and how coach power use served as predictors of athletes' satisfaction with coach.

The instruments were used the Power in Sport Questionnaire-Other (PSQ-O for athletes); Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ) and a questionnaire related to demographic variables. Data were collected from athletes (n=147) in Professional Women's Handball League in Iran.

The results indicated that the bases of power's coaches were positively associated with athlete's satisfaction. It showed that perceived reward, coercive, referent and expert power of coaches were significant predictors of athlete's satisfaction. But legitimate power did not significantly predict satisfaction; So that ,54% of the variance athletes' satisfaction with coach was explained by bases of power's coaches.

**Keywords:** bases of power, coach, perception, athletes' satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

Power is extant in all social relationships and possessed by all individuals and social groups, arising out of their connections to each other (Gruneau, 1993). It reflects the ability to get things done, the capacity to act, or the ability to choose what will happen (Tomlinson& Strachan, 1996). Krausz (1986) argued "Power is the ability to influence the actions of others, individuals or groups. Cangemi (1992) asserted: "Power is the individual's capacity to move others, to entice others, to persuade and encourage others to attain specific goals or to engage in specific behavior; it is the capacity to influence and motivate others". Also, he believed that successful leaders move and influence people through their power toward greater accomplishments for themselves and their organizations. According to Lyle(2002); coach-athlete relationship is no exception and the exercise of power is an internal social issue. People in general, and coaches and players (and even sport officials and spectators) in particular, possess power to the extent that they have the ability to influence or change the attitudes or behaviors of others in a socio-cultural environment (Wann et al, 2000; Konter, 2010).

In sport, where coaches have considerable power, this term is synonymous with action. The challenge for coaches is taking the right actions—actions that contribute to the all-round development of athletes, both while they participate in sport and throughout the rest of their lives (Tomlinson& Strachan, 1996).

Although the importance of power in the sphere of sports has been neglected, other social scientists have completed extensive examinations of the phenomenon. Perhaps the most influential work was conducted by French and Raven (1959). These authors identified five sources of interpersonal power: reward, coercive, referent, legitimate, and expert power (Wann et al, 2000).

**Reward** power is stems from the authority to bestow rewards on other persons. It exists when the promise/granting of desirable consequences others. For example, a player will follow the requests of a coach because the coach has the power to reward the player with playing time, verbal praise, extra bonuses and other rewards (Wann et al, 2000; Laios et al, 2003).

**Coercive** power refers to the authority to punish or recommend punishment. It occurs when influence is a result of a threat or actual imposition of some unpleasant consequences. Coaches have coercive power when they have the right to criticize individual and team performance, punish improper behavior, fire assistants or personnel, etc.

Coaches can punish the player with verbal reprimands, negative gesture, giving less playing time, forcing a player to play a different and possibly less glamorous position, and making players run laps (Konter, 2010; Laios et al, 2003).

**Referent** power involves the ability to be liked, trusted and respected by the group members.

Players are more likely to follow the directions of coaches they respect, like, and admire. So, the coaches with high referent power are capable of persuading athletes to follow him/her (Wann et al, 2000; Konter, 2010; Laios et al, 2003).

**Legitimate** power involves the ability to use one's position and authority within the organization, group or team. For example, many players follow the requests of a coach simply because this individual is recognized as an authority figure. The coach's position confers authority to team members (Wann et al, 2000; Konter, 2010; Laios et al, 2003).

**Expert** power comes from the coach's special knowledge, skills, and experience. It exists when people believe because of what they believe they know or could do influence them. For example, when a coach is an expert, with many successes/ victories/ distinctions, players will believe in them and will follow recommendations, because of their superior knowledge on the particular sport (Laios et al, 2003).

In addition to French and Raven's interpersonal power construct, a number of authors suggested a two-power typology incorporating personal and positional powers. Position power can be equated with reward, coercive, and legitimate powers while personal power is congruent with referent and expert powers (Konter, 2010).

These interpersonal powers to sport settings adapted by Wann, Metcalf, Brewer and Whiteside in North America and showing the psychometrically sound validity and reliability results of the five-factor model (Konter, 2010).

Hersey et al. (2001) believed that leaders who understand and know how to use power are more effective than those who do not or will not use power. So understanding power is essential for career progression (Sheldon & Parker, 1997). These arguments stress the importance of leadership in exercising power to achieve organizational success via others' compliance (Braynion, 2004).

About power, it is necessary to note that what could lead to influence, it's not power actuality; But that is others' perception about power (Hersey et al, 1999). However, Shaver (1975) cited by Kenow and et al (1999), has suggested that an individual's perception of another's behavior is more important than the behavior itself in determining one's feelings or actions toward the other person. Also Communication the coach - athlete not excluded from this issue; players' perception of the coaches' power is especially important. Because their perception of power shown a different results. One important consequence of the use of power is the satisfaction of subordinates. So that, each of the power bases of supervisors has shown a different relationship with the satisfaction of subordinates.

Carson et al (1993) in a meta-analytic study, examined social power bases and interrelationships and outcomes. They demonstrated one of the consequences uses of supervisors with expert and referent power; is satisfaction of subordinates. Also, Rahim and Afza (1993) showed that the use of supervisors with referent power, leading to higher job satisfaction in the U.S. accountants. Kim Lia & Guan Tui (2009) found same results, that referent the power of supervisors, is positively associated with subordinates' satisfaction. Afza (2005) and Kim Lian (2008) in their studies showed that in addition to the power bases of expert and referent, the use of supervisors of reward power is positively associated with subordinate satisfaction. Wallace (2010) reported relationship between satisfactions with the coercive power source is negative.

Also, studies in the sports setting that investigate power bases used by coaches have shown that coaches tend to more use bases of expert and referent power (Laios et al, 2003), and use of these two types bases of power is associated with greater satisfaction in athletes (Wann et al, 2000; Huang, 2007). However studies assessing the relationship between power base used by coaches and satisfaction' athlete is limited in the field of sports. While, Thurman (2006) examined athletes' perception of used the power of coaching and the association between playing status and sport satisfaction. The results showed that the only reward and expert power of coaches have meaningful relationship with satisfaction athletes.

Acquiring knowledge that how power influences on athlete satisfaction will allow the coaches to better use their power bases by change or maintain their power bases to achieve desirable outcomes. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted in Iran on this issue. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine athletes' perceptions of coaches' power as indicators of satisfaction with coaches in Professional Women's Handball League.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants/Sample

The sample was composed of 147 female athletes participating at the 2010-2011 Iranian Professional League Handball. The majority of the respondents age ranged less than 20 years (42.9%), between 21 and 24 years (39.7%), 25–28 years (15.2%), and only 2.7% were 29 and over. About sixty-five percent (65.1%) of these athletes had sports participation experience which were 5-7 years (22.3%), 2-4 years (5.4%) and 6.2% less than 2 years have activities background in the club.

### 2.2 Procedure

First, The PSQ-O and ASQ items were translated into Persian and English again by researchers with experience of sport and sports psychology; and with a good level of English. Once a consensus had been reached for the translations, we compared them to the original version in English to certify that each item had the same meaning. Reliability analyses for each of the scales were computed by Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficients of .91 for PSQ-O and .89 for ASQ which was satisfactory. Then, Consent to conduct the investigation was given by the coaches of the each team. After securing the coaches' approval, athletes were approached by the researchers and told that the general purpose of the study was to assess their perceptions of coaches' power and their satisfaction with them. Each participant volunteered to complete a questionnaire at their competition venue during the Iranian women's handball league. The researchers administered the PSQ-O and ASQ questionnaires to the athletes in each team sport before the commencement of a regular practice.

### 2.3 Measures

#### 2.3.1 Demographic Questions

Participants were asked to indicate their age and number of years played

#### 2.3.2 Power in Sport Questionnaire-other (PSQ-O) Developed by Wann et al 2000

This version concerns an individual's perceptions of the power possessed by others. For example, athletes believe that others within the sport system (e.g., coaches and officials) possess certain types of power, as a result, they follow the orders and decisions of these individuals. PSQ-O has total 15 items with five factors, reward, coercive, referent, legitimate and expert powers. PSQ-O are Likert-scale formats and responses to each item range from 1 (this is very untrue) to 9 (this is very true).

#### 2.3.3 Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ) Created by Riemer & Chelladurai (1998) Was Also Utilized in This Study

The ASQ contains 56 items grouped into 15 subscales. Respondents use a 7-point Likert type scale ranged from 1 (not satisfied at all) to 7 (extremely satisfied). For the purposes of this study, the researchers used four of the ASQ's most applicable subscales in the present study. Participants responded to each of the 14 items distributed on the four subscales: training and instruction satisfaction (TIS); personal treatment satisfaction (PTS); team performance satisfaction (TP); and individual performance satisfaction (IPS). The training and instruction and personal treatment subscales concentrate on satisfaction with the process of coaching behavior, while team performance and individual performance subscales assess satisfaction with outcomes associated with the process of leadership.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Data analyses were done by using SPSS 16.0. The punctuations of different measures were calculated based on the mean of each item corresponding to the factor. Data analysis techniques were descriptive analysis, internal reliability with Cronbach's alpha, Spearman correlations coefficient, and linear regression analysis with an Enter procedure.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Mean Score for Athletes Concerning Power Bases

Table 1 indicates that the athletes preferred referent and legitimate power with the highest mean score ( $M = 22.76$ ,  $SD = 4.7$ ;  $M = 21.7$ ,  $SD = 5.5$  respectively) and followed by expert power ( $M = 20.55$ ,  $SD = 5.5$ ), coercive power ( $M = 17.9$ ,  $SD = 6.3$ ) reward power ( $M = 17.72$ ,  $SD = 7.1$ ).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation for athletes' perceptions of coaches' power

Subscales	M	SD
Reward power	17.72	7.1
Coercive power	17.9	6.3
Referent power	22.76	4.7
Legitimate power	21.7	5.5
Expert power	20.55	5.5

### 3.2 Correlations between Variables

Spearman correlation was used to ascertain the relationship between athletes' perceptions of coaches' power and satisfaction with their coach (see Table 2).

Table 2 shows that spearman correlations between athlete satisfaction each of the five power bases (reward, coercive, referent, legitimate and expert powers) are positive and significant ( $r = .601$ ;  $r = .35$ ;  $r = .46$ ;  $r = .38$  and  $r = .604$  respectively,  $p < .01$ ). The overall correlations were moderate and positive indicating a substantial relationship for reward, expert and referent power.

Table 2. Spearman correlations among study variables

variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Reward power	-					
2.Coercive power	0.77	-				
3.Referent power	0.67	0.6	-			
4.Legitimate power	0.67	0.69	0.8	-		
5.Expert power	0.76	0.62	0.77	0.64	-	
6. Satisfaction	0.601	0.35	0.46	0.38	0.604	-

All significant at  $P < .01$  (2-tailed).

### 3.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analyses

Table 3 shows the results Enter regression analyses with athlete satisfaction as criterion variable and bases of power 'coaches as predictor variables. Table 3 shows that, using the Enter method, significant model emerged:  $F(5,106) = 25.28$ ,  $p < .01$ . The model explained 54% of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = .544$ ). Information for the predictor variable that are included in the model also appears in Table 3. Reward, coercive, referent and expert powers were the four significant predictors. Reward powers was the most significant predictor ( $\beta = .71$ ) followed by expert ( $\beta = .56$ ).

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis of variables predicting satisfaction

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$
Reward power	2.21	.37	.71*
Coercive power	-1.27	.38	-.36*
Referent power	-1.6	.53	-.4*
Legitimate power	.14	.5	.03
Expert power	2.66	.55	.56*

\* $P < .001$

## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the coaches' bases of power and athletes' satisfaction with coach. The findings indicated that coaches' bases of power (legitimate, reward, expert, referent and coercive power) were positively related to the satisfaction of athlete. The correlations ranged from 0.35 to 0.604 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Expert power ranked highest among other power exercises (coefficient .604). This was followed by reward and referent power, then legitimate and coercive power. In general, expert and referent power (the personal-power bases), has a positive effect on relationship between supervisor - subordinate; also

various studies showed a positive relationship between the expert and referent power with subordinates' satisfaction (Bachman et al, 1968; Elangovan & Xie, 2000; Afza, 2005; Kim Lian, 2008).

In the present study, also the reward power has relatively strong positive relationship with players' satisfaction. This finding is parallel with the study Turman (2006). He indicated coaches who use the power of the reward, leads to the athletes' satisfaction. According to define, reward power is capacity to act and influence others is based on coach's ability to provide something that others want or value. These rewards may be material or emotional. For Examples; smile of approval, positive verbal feedback, a cash prize, selection to a special team (Tomlinson & Strachan, 1996). So coaches can provide appropriate feedback to the athlete's performance and behavior, can lead to athlete satisfaction.

The results showed a positive relationship between legitimate with players' satisfaction, too. Previous studies' results concerning the legitimate power relation to be mixed. So that, in the some studies a positive relationship (Elangovan & Xie, 2000) and others have reported a negative relationship (Afza, 2005). Also, Results of the present study indicated that satisfaction was positively associated with the coercive power. This finding is consistent with previous researches that have reported a negative relationship (Bachman et al, 1968; Elangovan & Xie, 2000).

In explanation of this conflict can be described that individuals are influenced by their need for achievement, to be productive, reaching desirable goals and affiliation of positive relationships. According to Slack (1997) people also tend to bias toward these goals needs (Slack, 1997). Therefore, in order to catalyzed achieve these goals; athletes make themselves under the influence of coach's power to motivate and pursue direction and correction to achieve their goals.

It can be held, the athlete to achieve their desired goals also considers desirable coaches' legitimate power and coercive power. Another explanation may be stated in connection with the coercive power coercive power can take many forms, (e.g. telling athletes that they can't leave a practice until they have completed a series of conditioning exercises or else they will be dropped from the competitive team (Tomlinson & Strachan, 1996), therefore in the studied population, may severe and form of coercive power is not so that it can lead to dissatisfaction.

In summary, results showed that all five types of power coaches were associated with athletes' satisfaction. In the past, expert power and referent power were classified as positive power bases and legitimate, reward, and coercive into "negative" bases. The findings of the present study suggest that such classifications may be oversimplifications. Specific forms of coaches' power can be motivating and satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction for athletes. The multiple effects of the different types of power acquired by the leader require serious consideration (Elangovan & Xie, 2000).

The results, in addition indicate that distinct five bases of power, but also shows the importance each of five types of power on athletes' satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis indicated that the reward, expert, referent and coercive power of coaches were all significant predictors of athletes' satisfaction. Interestingly, expert and reward power emerged as strong predictors of satisfaction with the coach. But legitimate power did not significantly predict satisfaction. Elangovan and Xie (2000) in their study found that the power bases of reward, expert and referent were positively predictor of employee satisfaction but the coercive and legitimate power did not predict the satisfaction.

In this study, the 54% were changed in the satisfaction of athletes explained by bases power' coaches. So, coaches becoming aware of their power and learning how to use it wisely who were with a leadership skill that helps them to build healthy coach-athlete relationships and enables athletes to perform better (Tomlinson & Strachan, 1996).

Effective leaders combine the various bases and sources of power, electing to use them in appropriate situations. An effective leader rarely depends on only one source or base of power.

Leaders who use power effectively accomplish tasks in the organization without relying on their job title subordinates (Fuqua et al, 1998).

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