



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Fostering Athletic Success: The Nexus of intrinsic Motivation, Coaching Democracy, and Player Performance

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**ABSTRACT**

The players' performance is the outcome of various influential factors that count toward desired values and outcomes in a diverse situation. In this regard, a conducive environment, social support, skills, knowledge, experience, and passion have been considered as leading factors that influence the players' performance in diverse manners. Thus, coaching behavioral approaches like democratic and autocratic are considered significant attributes in determining players' motivation leading towards desired efforts overwhelmed at decent performances. For this purpose, a conceptual framework has been developed from existing research studies to examine desired linkages among research variables (hypothesized relationships) in the particular context (higher education) by using the inferential method. In this drive, the population of the study comprises coaches and players from different universities hailing from the southern region of KP, Pakistan, while a sample has been extracted from statistical formulae from those who were contacted to examine desired relationships. The results provide sufficient information for reaching a conclusion wherein the positive association (correlation), significant impact (regression), and partial mediation (mediation procedure) have been confirmed from data analysis that further provides clues towards some recommendations to players, coaches, and policy-makers. Thus, it is suggested from the conclusion that coaching behavioral traits are significant for motivating players toward desired performances overwhelmed at anticipated outcomes

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**INTRODUCTION**

Sports is an important phenomenon that nurtures players' behavior towards particular tasks and goals wherein efficiencies, diligence, commitment, and undaunted efforts leading to attired performance matter a lot while reaching the desired consequences (Williamson et al., 2022). The performance is anchored squarely on diverse issues like physical qualification, environmental constraints, psychological stability, social support, cooperation, coordination, and team cohesion that are vital for sustaining the desired position overwhelmed at the anticipated outcome (Gillet et al., 2010; Mulvenna et al., 2020). These are serious issues and can increase/decrease the levels of effort and potential leading to desired abilities toward required performance as recommended through goal-setting theoretical approaches (Locke and Latham, 2002; Sunday et al., 2015; Jeong et al., 2021). There are certain other factors such as coaches' responses, personalities, and behavior that are vital in determining players' attitudes and behavior in diverse situations to sustain strong psychological positions towards desired outcomes (Lochbaum et al., 2022). The entire phenomenon starts from players' efforts, culminates with motivational approaches, and is overwhelmed by required performances and outcomes.

The players' motivation towards desired performances is dependent upon various critical factors and coaching behavior has been widely recognized as the foremost phenomenon (Labadan and Khan, 2021). The researchers recommended different nature of behaviors and styles that are critical for inspiring the players to attain desired outcomes (Naseer et al., 2019; Ercegovic et al., 2020). In this

drive, coaching styles are considered as most important wherein democratic and autocratic behaviors are foremost used by coaches concerned with diverse situations (Labadan and Khan, 2021). The coaching behavior is overwhelmed by players' motivation that culminates in desired performances (Yemiru and Khan, 2020). The coaches are responsible for inspiring players on how to perform over strategic approaches and how to attain desired outcomes over artistic abilities leading to higher success in diverse situations (Labadan and Khan, 2021). The main theme behind coaches' behavior is consequently the players' motivation and performance as coach behavior and intrinsic motivation are leading attributes responsible for encouraging players to maintain strong positions in diverse situations towards desired outcomes (Williamson et al., 2022). The players are thus required to maintain their strong standings over sustained behaviors to maintain the team performance.

The coaching behavior is vital for inspiring the players to be actively involved and effectively participate in the gaming activities those which demand certain capabilities and skills from players to attain desired outcomes (Francisco et al., 2018). Effective motivation and respectable performance are outcomes of actual behaviors on the part of concerned coaches (Wulf and Lewthwaite, 2016). The coaches' artistic potentials, traits, and styles are leading capabilities and characteristics that make them successful in a competitive environment to maintain the desired strategic approaches toward required success (Francisco et al., 2018). The skills and potential are leading attributes that are required for coaches and players to maintain desired outcomes through effective utilization of coaches' experience as well as players' performance (Ercegovac et al., 2020; Labadan and Khan, 2021). The coaching's effective behavior and players' efficient responsiveness are contingent on many determining issues that overwhelm the situations towards particular demands in particular situations (Labadan and Khan, 2021). Effective involvement and participation along with coaching responsible behaviors are vital for players to show the utmost performance to attain the desired outcome leading to required success in different situations toward desired success (Ercegovac et al., 2020).

The players' performance is the outcome of the various crucial issues on the part of players and coaches that remain intact with the efforts of players and the experiences of the coaches concerned (Labadan and Khan, 2021). The players' performance and motivation are important phenomena that encourage team unity and strength and are vital for players and teams in chasing their strategic objectives (Naseer et al., 2019). Thus, coaches' behavior, players' involvement, and team cohesion are vital parameters that inspire teams and coaches toward expected outcomes (Moen et al., 2014). Thus, intrinsic motivation is vital for inspiring the players to get advantages from coaching skills, knowledge, and experiences towards the attainment of particular objectives over sustained behaviors (Sheehan et al., 2018). The coaches use a democratic approach wherein the main focus remains on inspiring players over inspirational motivation and independence whereas autocratic behavior focuses on tyrannical approaches (Cranmer et al., 2018). The coaches use leading behaviors wherever the situation demands the application and adaptability of certain approaches toward player motivation overwhelmed at desired outcomes (Lam et al., 2021). Consequently, coach behavior is vital for the player's motivation and performance leading towards desired sustainable developments. Thus, the problem addressed in this study is related to examining the relationships of different natures among the predictor, mediator, and criterion variables to validate the existing research, extract new information, and contribute existing knowledge database.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the association between coaching democratic behavior, intrinsic motivation & players' performance (in line with H1).
2. To examine the cause-and-effect relationship between coaching democratic behaviors, intrinsic motivation, and players' performance (in line with H2).
3. To examine the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in connecting the coaching democratic behavior and players' performance (in line with H3).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Individuals' participation in sports brings along certain positive changes in their lives that are imperative for physical and mental grooming (Sheehan et al., 2018). Sports participation inspires individuals to be actively involved in sports activities to sustain their physical desired appearances

and psychological strength which are vital for active lives (Sunday et al., 2015; Wulf and Lewthwaite, 2016). In this linking, many factors are involved in improving players' interests in sports activities in which the social support and inspiring behavior from the coaches are more phenomenal (Cruz and Kim, 2017). The coaches are responsible for inspiring players through their effective and encouraging behaviors to participate actively in sports activities to comprehend the desired as well as leading consequences and outcomes (Júnior and Vale, 2019). The coaching behavior along with intrinsic motivation are leading attributes that overwhelm effective efforts and potentials leading towards required performance on the part of players that in turn have significant culmination at desired capabilities and predicted outcomes (Ahmad et al., 2022). The coaches through different traits are thus responsible for the motivational and behavioral transformation of the players to sustain their credibility towards the desired leading outcomes through effective motivation and respectable performance.

Coaching democratic behavior has a significant impact on players' motivation and performance as it helps in providing strategic guidelines for promoting a sense of belongingness along with a sense of obligation (Jin et al., 2022). The coaches through democratic behavior inspire players with their effective involvement and participation through inspirational strategies along with intellectual stimulation to back and attain desired tasks and objectives (Ignacio et al., 2017; Gao et al., 2021). The autocratic coaching style known as the intense style is applicable where coaches assume authority for decision-making over centralized manners over active direction and guidance towards desired tasks (Ismail et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivation involves stimulus from psychological and emotional perspectives that are vital for maintaining players' apprehensions toward desired values through effective strategic styles (Lam et al., 2021). Coaching behavior and motivation have a significant impact on the players' efforts and potential through effective performances (Jin et al., 2022). Consequently, coaching effective behavior and transformational motivation is vital for motivating the players to consider the diverse environmental and contextual elements to attain the desired leading outcomes. In this drive, democratic behavior is widely recognized as a significant tool for attaining this task thereby inspiring the players to ensure the desired credibility and required outcomes.

### **Coaching Democratic Behavior**

The coaching behavior has a significant and influential impact on players' determination towards the effective performance (Ignacio et al., 2017). It is the prime responsibility of coaches to inspire players with proper guidance and supervision on how to participate and how to attain desired tasks in diverse situations (Cranmer et al., 2018). Behavioral approaches and models inspire coaches to perform effectively in attaining assigned responsibilities over diverse behaviors based on situational circumstances (Ismail et al., 2020; Lam et al., 2021). The coaches are responsible for providing guidance and supervision to players that further motivate them towards desired outcomes through efforts and performances over democratic behaviors (Ahmad et al., 2022). Democratic behavior is an effective leadership style efficient in generating new ideas and nurturing commitment in players through prolonged professional capabilities and development. Democratic behavior leads players towards comprehension through acceptable decision-making with mutual/shared cooperation among players and coaches (Júnior & Vale, 2019). These coaches are active in taking responsibility for effective involvement in sports activities to attain desired performances from the players concerned. Democratic behavior is thus recognized as a significant predictor towards various outcomes overwhelmed by players' motivation towards tasks and realization of desired consequences.

### **Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is the internal inspiration of players toward particular tasks and objectives overwhelmed at desired outcomes (Labadan and Khan, 2021). Motivation is a significant phenomenon that is responsible for various desirable consequences on the part of players and coaches towards anticipated feedback (Ahmad et al., 2022). Thus, motivation is a vital tool for required performance in diverse situations (Sheehan et al., 2018). The motivation is main task of coaches wherein various approaches along with behavioral traits are used to encourage concerned players to show their utmost performance and enthusiasm towards assigned tasks (Ercegovac et al., 2020). Thus, performance and motivation are directly linked as both reinforce each other for particular purposes those that are the main desires of coaches in diverse circumstances and

situational perspectives (Labadan and Khan, 2021). Performance and motivation are leading attributes that encourage players to participate effectively in leading tasks in the diverse nature of games to attain the assigned tasks over undaunted efforts and performance (Moen et al., 2014). Motivation whether intrinsic/extrinsic is vital in determining the attitude, behavior, and actions of players and coaches towards desired consequences and outcomes. The motivation thus acts as a guiding principle towards players' inspiration to use the required capabilities and knowledge to pursue the different tasks and ensure success.

### Players' Performance

Performance is the outcome of various efforts and hard work of individual towards particular matters that needs concentration and competencies to cater to desired outcomes over certain critical approaches (Williamson et al., 2022). The performance is the main weapon of players used to determine objectives that are critical without the proper determination (Wulf and Lewthwaite, 2016). Performance is the main phenomenon that maintains the potential of players towards desired outcomes through various determining factors and attributes vital for desired outcomes (Naseer et al., 2019). The coaches' democratic behavior empowers players to take part in decision-making concerning practice methods, group goals, game strategies, and tactics that are critical for determining the desired behavior and outcomes (Ignacio et al., 2017). Performance is the outcome of motivation while motivation is the outcome of the coaches' effective behaviors and understanding of players' efforts and potentials in particular contexts (Labadan & Khan, 2021). Consequently, performance is an effective and multi-dimensional phenomenon wherein players' efficiency and effectiveness count towards the desired outcomes along with the critical dimensional role of motivation, involvement, and participation for particular outcomes. The existing and accessible research provides sufficient information about the relationships among research variables that are further aimed to validate in the current study.

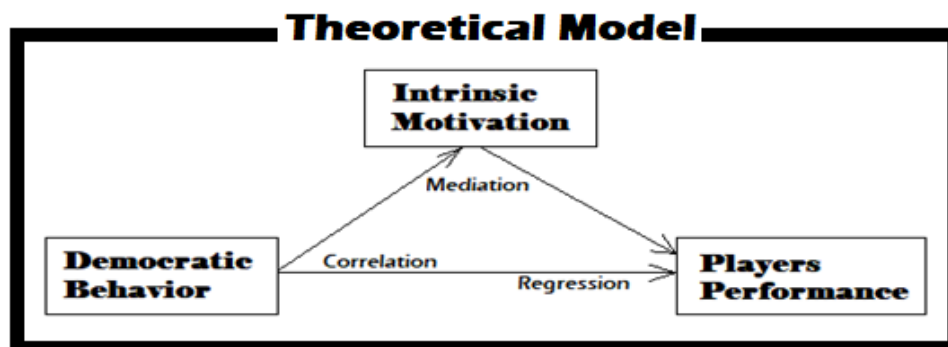


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

### Research Hypothesis

1. There is a positive and significant association between coaching democratic behavior, intrinsic motivation & players' performance (H1).
2. There is a significant cause-and-effect relationship between coaching democratic behaviors, intrinsic motivation, and players' performance (H2).
3. The intrinsic motivation significantly mediated the relationship between coaching democratic behavior and players' performance (H3).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research design used comprises descriptive and inferential aspects to describe descriptive statistics and relationships among research variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). The research design offers methods and procedures as per the nature and objectives of research to follow and attain the objectives (Glymour & Clark, 2015). The researcher used diverse statistical procedures to examine the relationship (association via correlation, impact via regression, and mediation via Hayes Process Macro) between the coaching behavior, intrinsic motivation, and players' performance in the particular context to attain the desired outcomes.

### Survey Approach

The approach denotes the methods for accessing the respondents however, the suitable approach is based upon the nature of the study and requirements as per objectives (Creswell & Williams, 2012). The researcher used a survey approach as per the requirement to access the sample from the population to conduct the study and reach at logical conclusions. As, the nature of the study is quantitative, in the survey, a questionnaire was used as a tool to access and approach the respondents and record responses of respondents concerning the coaching behaviors (democratic), intrinsic motivation, and players' performance to analyze data for examining the desired relationships and reaching the conclusion and make decisions.

### Data Collection

The data collection is vital as without suitable data collection, scholars may not be able to conduct the study to attain the desired outcomes (Monaghan and Hartman, 2007). The data comprise diverse nature secondary (existing literature) and primary (first-hand) data that are vital for conducting the research and reaching conclusions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The researcher collected secondary data from available and accessible sources through different online databases and research articles while collecting primary data through a structured questionnaire adapted from existing research studies to collect and analyze the data and reach a conclusion.

### Population & Sampling

The population of study comprises coaches and players from different universities hailing from the Southern region of KP, Pakistan. In the southern region, 5-universities are located and functional thereby providing teaching and learning facilities along with the provision of the sports sciences and physical education. Since the entire population is not accessible to conduct the study that's why researchers rely upon sampling. In these universities, two-track, and field events, two team events, and two individual sports are useful wherein athletes 600 and 72 coaches are active population (672) in these universities whereas a sample of 250 was selected (Yamini, 1967). Consequently, 250 questionnaires were distributed over emails, and WhatsApp among the respondents of the current study wherein 238 were recollected by using a 5-point Likert scale that was used for data analysis.

### Questionnaire Design

Quantitative studies focus always on certain tools for the primary data collection for particular determination (Presser and Krosnick, 2010). To access the population through the sample, the study used a questionnaire as a tool to collect primary data from respondents. The researcher adopts a questionnaire from the existing research studies thereby making some changes as per contextual and situational demands. For coaching behavior, Lonsdale et al. (2008) scale was used, for intrinsic motivation, Gillet et al., (2010), and players' performance Kavussanu and Boardley (2009) scales were used and thus, enough support was provided in response to the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

The analysis of data is the procedure of answering research questions. Consequently, various tools are applied based on the requirements of research studies to first "reduce" the data in a systematic manner, into manageable forms to answer research questions (Monaghan and Hartman, 2007). In this linking, diverse tools and procedures were applied like the argumentation process for the qualitative data analysis, correlation procedure to examine the association among research variables, regression (prediction), and mediation (Hayes process) to find answers to hypotheses and reach conclusion in systematic manners to produce desired outcomes.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results obtained through statistical procedures about hypothesized relationships have been produced in this section to analyze collected data, reach conclusions, and make suitable decisions based upon acceptance and rejection of hypotheses along with the provision of support through the existing literature.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Democratic Behavior	238	1.50	4.40	3.0811	.66847

Intrinsic Motivation	238	2.00	4.70	3.4903	.61434
Players' Performance	238	1.70	4.70	3.5084	.63573
Valid N (listwise)	238				

**Table 2 Data Normality**

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
Democratic Behavior	238	-.386	.158	-.596	.314
Intrinsic Motivation	238	-.292	.158	-.463	.314
Players' Performance	238	-.605	.158	-.169	.314
Valid N (list-wise)	238				

**Table 3 Reliability Statistics**

SN	Research Variables	Existing Studies	Cronbach Alpha	Items
1	Democratic Behavior	Lonsdale et al. (2008)	.822	10
2	Intrinsic Motivation	Gillet et al. (2010)	.799	10
3	Players' Performance	(Kavus & Board, 2009)	.864	10
4	Questionnaire	(Presser & Krosnick, 2010)	.886	30

The above tables (1-3) revealed information about descriptive statistics, data normality, and reliability statistics to examine the data and extract desired information. Descriptive statistics offer the information that helps in describing research variables in terms of mean, minimum, and maximum response rates and standard deviation (see Table 1). The skewness and kurtosis are two statistical measures that provide information about the shape and distribution of a dataset. They are used to understand the deviation from a normal distribution and to identify any outliers or unusual patterns in data (George & Mallery, 2010). Thus, if the skewness is less than zero, it means the distribution has a longer left tail and is skewed to the left. If skewness is greater than zero, it means the distribution has a longer right tail and is skewed to the right. The literature reveals that the value of skewness and kurtosis should be between -3 and + 3 (Pallant, 2010). Thus, results are within the threshold values and thus signify the normality of data used for analysis (see Table 2). The reliability statistics provide information about internal consistency among measures and show that all values are within threshold values (.6) (see table-3) for all variables such as democratic behavior (.822), intrinsic motivation (.799), and players' performance (.864), and confirmed the internal consistency among the measures used in current research.

**Table 4 Correlation Analysis (H1)**

		[1]	[2]	[3]
Democratic Behavior [1]	Pearson Correlation	1	.566**	.693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	238	238	238
Intrinsic Motivation [2]	Pearson Correlation	.566**	1	.729**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	238	238	238
Players' Performance [3]	Pearson Correlation	.693**	.729**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	238	238	238

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The association among the research variables (democratic behavior, intrinsic motivation, and players' performance) was hypothesized through the first hypothesis as extracted from the theoretical framework to examine the association concerning the strength and directions. The results of correlation as statistical procedure confirmed the association among predicting, mediating, and criterion variables like democratic behavior and players' performance ( $R=.693$  &  $P\text{-value}= .000$ ), intrinsic motivation and players' performance ( $R=.729$  &  $P\text{-value}= .000$ ), democratic behavior and intrinsic motivation ( $R = .566$  &  $P\text{-value} = .000$ ) which thus confirmed the association among the research variables of current study and consequently, from the correlation results, H1 about association between the predicting variable (democratic behavior), mediating variable (intrinsic motivation), and criterion variable (players' performance) is therefore accepted and substantiated from the results of previous research studies.

**Table 5 Regression Analysis (Model Summary) (H2)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.804a	.647	.644	.37942

**Table 5a Regression Analysis (ANOVA) (H2)**

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	SIG.	
1	Regression	61.953	2	30.977	215.180	.000b
	Residual	33.830	235	.144		
	Total	95.783	237			

**Table 5b Regression Analysis (Coefficients of Regression) (H2)**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	SE	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.510	.148		3.445	.001
	Democratic Behavior	.392	.045	.412	8.754	.000
	Intrinsic Motivation	.513	.049	.496	10.548	.000
a. Predictors: Intrinsic Motivation, Democratic Behavior						
b. Dependent Variable: Players' Performance						

second hypothesis was about the examination of a cause-and-effect relationship between research variables like predicting variables (democratic behavior), mediating variables (intrinsic motivation), and criterion variables (players' performance) to examine the predictability of the players' performance through democratic behavior and intrinsic motivation. The results of regression thus show that a 64.7% change in the players' performance is due to democratic behavior and intrinsic motivation which has been further confirmed via ANOVA. The coefficient of regression revealed the individual impact of predictors on criterion variable wherein democratic behavior showed a significant impact on players' performance ( $\beta = .392$  &  $P\text{-value} = .000$ ), and intrinsic motivation on players' performance ( $\beta = .513$  &  $P\text{-value} = .000$ ), which thus confirmed higher predictability of player performance through intrinsic motivation with higher  $\beta$ -value as compared to democratic behavior. The results of the regression procedure thus confirmed the predictability and consequently H2 is accepted.

**Mediation First Step (a)**

**Table 6 Mediation Analysis (Model Summary) H3**

R	R Square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.5661	.3205	.2576	111.2895	1.0000	236.0000	.0000

**Table 6a Mediation Analysis (Coefficients of Regression) H3**

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.8874	.1555	12.1404	.0000	1.5811	2.1937
Democratic Behavior	.5202	.0493	10.5494	.0000	.4231	.6174

Predicting Variable: Democratic Behavior

Criterion Variable: Intrinsic Motivation



The mediating role of intrinsic motivation in linking democratic behavior and players' performance was hypothesized through the third hypothesis wherein the Hayes Process Macro model was used for examination of the mediation procedure. The mediation provides four paths with different descriptions and detailed information regarding the mediating role whether partial mediation or full mediation. The first path revealed information about mediation wherein democratic behavior was used as a predicting variable and intrinsic motivation was used as a criterion variable as per the conditions and requirements of mediation. The results of the first path revealed that there is a 32% variation in intrinsic motivation due to democratic behavior as confirmed by the summary model. The coefficient of regression revealed that democratic behavior has a significant impact on intrinsic motivation ( $\beta = .5202$  & P-value = .000) which therefore meets the requirements of the first path of the mediation procedure and thus provides the clues for analyzing the other paths of mediation to reach the desired mediation conclusion.

### Mediation Second & Third Steps (b & c)

**Table 7 Mediation Analysis (Model Summary) H3**

R	R Square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.8042	.6468	.1440	215.1801	2.0000	235.0000	.0000

**Table 7a Mediation Analysis (Coefficients of Regression) H3**

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.5103	.1481	3.4449	.0007	.2185	.8022
Democratic Behavior	.3915	.0447	8.7540	.0000	.3034	.4796
Intrinsic Motivation	.5133	.0487	10.5485	.0000	.4175	.6092

Predicting Variable: Democratic Behavior, Intrinsic Motivation

Criterion Variable: Players' Performance

The first and third paths of mediation revealed information about mediation wherein democratic behavior and intrinsic motivation were used as predicting variables while players' performance was used as a criterion variable as per the requirements & conditions of mediation. The results revealed that there is a 64.68% variation in players' performance due to intrinsic motivation and democratic behavior as confirmed by the summary model. The coefficient of regression revealed that democratic behavior has a significant impact on players' performance ( $\beta = .3915$  & P-value = .000) and intrinsic motivation has a significant impact on players' performance ( $\beta = .5133$  & P-value = .000) which therefore meets the requirements of second and third paths of mediation procedure and thus provide the clues for analyzing the fourth path of mediation to reach the desired conclusion to reach the mediation decision that whether the mediation is full mediation or partial mediation from these mediation results.

### Mediation Fourth Step (c)

**Table 8 Mediation Analysis (Model Summary) H3**

R	R Square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6925	.4796	.2112	217.4748	1.0000	236.0000	.0000

**Table 8a Mediation Analysis (Coefficients of Regression) H3**

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.4792	.1408	10.5069	.0000	1.2019	1.7566
Democratic Behavior	.6586	.0447	14.7470	.0000	.5706	.7466

Predicting Variable: Democratic Behavior

Criterion Variable: Players' Performance



The fourth path of the mediation procedure provides important information for concluding the mediation process wherein the direct relationship has been confirmed by showing the impact of the predicting variable (democratic behavior) on the criterion variable (players' performance). The results of path four revealed that 47.96% variance is evident in players' performance due to the democratic behavior with significant results ( $\beta = .6586$  &  $P\text{-value} = .000$ ). Thus, all the paths have provided significant information in deciding the mediation and reaching conclusion. As, in an indirect relationship,  $\beta$  has been reduced from .6586 (direct relationship) to (.3915) (direct relationship) while the remaining values have remained significant which thus confirmed that the intrinsic motivation partially mediated the relationship between democratic behavior and player performance and thus, H3 is henceforward accepted based upon the results from the mediation process to draw conclusion.

## DISCUSSIONS

The existing research revealed that coaching behaviors promote democratic decision-making and autonomy that influences athletes' intrinsic motivation, which in turn affects their performance outcomes (Gillet et al., 2010; Labadan and Khan, 2021; Jin et al., 2022). The coaching democratic behavior confirms coaches' involvement in the decision-making process, considering players' input, and providing opportunities for players to have a voice in team matters. This coaching style values open communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making, and efficacy rather than relying solely on authoritarian directives from the coach (Ignacio et al., 2017; Ercegovic et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2021). Intrinsic motivation helps in engaging the players in activities toward inherent satisfaction and enjoyment it provides, rather than for external rewards or pressures. In a sports context, intrinsically motivated athletes participate in their sport since they find it enjoyable, challenging, and personally fulfilling as required for comprehending various leading tasks (Sunday et al., 2015; Labadan & Khan, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022). Motivation has been found to be positively linked with various positive outcomes, including improved performance, increased effort, as well as enhanced psychological well-being.

The role of intrinsic motivations suggests that coaching democratic behaviors positively influences players' intrinsic motivation, which then leads to enhanced performance outcomes. When coaches involve players in the decision-making, respect their autonomy, and provide opportunities for self-expression and choice, it fosters a sense of ownership and investment in the team's goals and processes (Sunday et al., 2015; Yemiru and Khan, 2020; Gao et al., 2021). This, in turn, can increase athletes' intrinsic motivation to excel, put in the effort, and strive for personal growth and mastery. Thus, the bond between coaching democratic behavior and players' performance is mediated by intrinsic motivation because intrinsically motivated athletes are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement, persistence, and commitment to sports (Gillet et al., 2010; Abedini et al., 2014; Naseer et al., 2019). They are driven by internal rewards such as personal satisfaction and the joy of playing, which can positively influence their focus, effort, and performance during training and competitions (Sunday et al., 2015; Yemiru and Khan, 2020). Research studies have provided support for the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the relationship between coaching democratic behavior and players' performance.

The studies found that athletes who perceive their coaches as democratic and autonomy-supportive tend to experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation, which, in turn, predicts better performance outcomes, such as skill development, task mastery, and competitive success (Sunday et al., 2015; Wulf & Lewthwaite, 2016; Mulvenna et al., 2020). Thus, understanding the mediating role of intrinsic motivation highlights the importance of coaching behaviors that foster autonomy, involvement, and collaboration. Coaches who adopt a democratic coaching style and provide opportunities for players to be intrinsically motivated can positively influence players' performance outcomes (Sunday et al., 2015; Cranmer et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2021). Thus, regularly measure and evaluate the coaching approach and its impact on the athletes' intrinsic motivation and performance. Solicit feedback from athletes and be open to making adjustments based on their needs and preferences. In this linking, the coaching methods should be flexible and adaptable to ensure optimal motivation and performance outcomes in different situations. This knowledge can inform coaching practices and interventions aimed at enhancing athletes' motivation, engagement, and overall performance in sports.

## CONCLUSION

Intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in linking the coaching democratic behavior and players' performance in sports. Coaching behaviors help to promote democratic decision-making and autonomy support has a positive impact on players' intrinsic motivation that in turn, leads to improved performances. The players who perceive their coaches as democratic and autonomy-supportive are likely to experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation. This intrinsic motivation drives players to engage, persist, and commit to their sport, which ultimately enhances their focus, effort, and performance. The research studies have provided evidence for the mediating role of intrinsic inspiration, indicating that players with higher intrinsic drive tend to show better performance outcomes, like skill development, task mastery, and viable success. This highlights the importance of coaching behaviors that foster autonomy, involvement, and collaboration in maximizing the athletes' motivation and overall performance. Understanding the mediating role of intrinsic motivation can inform coaching practices and interventions. Coaches can adopt the democratic coaching style and provide opportunities for players to be intrinsically motivated, thereby positively influencing their performance. Thus, by creating an environment that values collaboration, open communication, and shared decision-making, coaches can enhance players' motivation, engagement, and performance in sports.

### **Recommendations**

Coaches play a crucial role in fostering an environment that supports intrinsic motivation and personal growth among athletes. By providing opportunities for players to actively participate in team matters and make decisions, coaches empower athletes to express their opinions, ideas, and preferences. This autonomy support instills a sense of control and ownership over their actions and outcomes. Moreover, coaches create a supportive atmosphere where athletes feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. By actively listening to players, considering their input, and incorporating their ideas into decision-making processes, coaches build trust and strengthen the athlete-coach relationship. Emphasizing skill development and personal growth as core objectives further enhances players' intrinsic motivation, as they find satisfaction in their progress and effort. Recognizing and celebrating players' efforts, achievements, and milestones with positive feedback reinforces their commitment and inspires continued excellence. The democratic behaviors of coaches contribute to a team culture characterized by positivity, support, and camaraderie, encouraging players to support one another. Such effective coaching behaviors promote a growth mindset, where mistakes and failures are seen as valuable opportunities for learning and improvement, ultimately creating an environment conducive to both personal and collective success.

### **Implications of Research**

This research underscores the critical role of coaching behaviors that promote autonomy, involvement, and collaboration in enhancing athlete motivation and performance. Coaches are encouraged to adopt a democratic coaching style, providing players with opportunities to actively participate in decision-making processes. Such practices not only enhance motivation but also contribute to improved performance outcomes. The findings also highlight the need for comprehensive coach training and education programs aimed at fostering effective coaching behaviors. These programs should focus on equipping coaches with the skills necessary to facilitate democratic decision-making, support athlete autonomy, and nurture intrinsic motivation among players.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in athletes for their long-term development and success. Coaches are pivotal in creating an environment that prioritizes autonomy, skill development, and personal growth, which can significantly boost both motivation and performance. The research also sheds light on the impact of democratic coaching behavior on team dynamics and culture. By adopting a democratic approach, coaches can promote positive communication, collaboration, and trust among team members, thereby cultivating a team culture built on mutual respect and confidence.

Lastly, the findings have practical implications for performance enhancement programs in sports. Coaches and practitioners are encouraged to design and integrate strategies that focus on fostering intrinsic motivation, such as goal setting, constructive feedback, and positive reinforcement. These

approaches not only amplify players' efforts and potential but also lay the foundation for sustained success and excellence in sports performance.

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