

# Relationship between leadership styles and stress indicators of sports leaders

Danish Chawla, Hariom Sharma

Graduate Student, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Department of Psychology

Lovely Professional University, Phagwara

**Abstract** - Sports are now not simply games rather highly competitive and considered as a performance. The present research intended to study the sports leaders for their stress experience. Twenty male sports coaches from different educational institutions in Jalandhar and Phagwara districts of Punjab state, India participated by responding the leadership style questionnaire and stress indicator questionnaire. The findings demonstrated the sports persons having low, moderate or high levels of authoritative, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. However, majority of the participants followed either moderate or high level of these leadership styles. Moderate democratic leaders were noticed with highest stress level (M=160.43, SD= 8.75) followed by moderate laissez-faire leaders (M=155.17, SD= 12.64) and high authoritarian leaders (M=151.25, SD= 17.96). Interestingly, sports persons using very high level of democratic style demonstrated least stress level (M= 119.67, SD= 18.58). The obtained findings confirmed leadership styles having relationship with stress and its various indicators. Democratic ( $r = -.539, -.479, = -.476, p < .05$ ) and laissez-faire ( $r = -.594, p < .01$ ) style of leaders had almost negative relationships with stress indicators, whereas authoritative styles leaders had positive relationships with stress, though these relationships could not reached at significant level. Physical, emotional, sleep, behavioral and personal dimensions of stress scale were examined in relation to all three types of leadership styles in the study. The findings contributed towards insight to use the leadership styles in ever increasing competitive field of sports.

**Keywords** - Sports leader, leadership styles, stress types

## INTRODUCTION

**Leadership** is the ability of the person to direct and guide other individuals or to entire organization. This is passed out by the attributes the leader possesses such as beliefs, ethics, character, value, knowledge and skills. The leader should be highly motivated to encourage the entire team. Leaders should lay down the part with such clarity that people should follow them. There is a particular relationship between the leader and the group members which is characterized by social connections and interpersonal. **Laissez-faire** type of leadership style, a leader lacks direct supervision of members and may fail to provide regular feedback to those who are in the supervision. When the team members are highly experienced and trained, they fall under this leadership style. As all the members may not possess these characteristics, so this leadership style hinders the production of team which needs management. **Autocratic** type of leadership style, the leader makes all the decisions alone without the effort of the others. The leader possesses all the authority and can enforce his or her decisions on team members. The judgment of autocratic leader cannot be challenged. This leadership style benefits the team members who need close supervision. **Participative** type of leadership style, the leader shares the decision making ability with the group members. It is also often called democratic leadership style. Ideas move freely amongst the group. The discussion is free-flowing. This style is required in rapid and dynamic changing environment where very little can be taken as a constant. **Transactional** type of leadership style, the leader gives certain tasks to perform by team members. The leader provides rewards or punishments on the basis of performance. The goals are predetermined by the both leader and the team members. Team members agree to follow the direction and the leadership of the leader to accomplish those goals. **Transformational** type of leadership style is to meet the goals with higher levels of communication are implemented, transformational leadership style is activated. To improve the performance and efficiency leaders use the communication strategies among team members. Moreover, a large picture in terms of goals is analyzed and team members are convinced to work upon the larger goals by distributing it in smaller tasks.

**Importance of leadership** - Effective direction: The activities of the team must be directed to attain the objectives. Direction of the objective is affected by leadership. It directs the activities of team towards the attainment of the specific goals. Source of motivation: Leadership is the power to motivate the followers in the group. Effective leadership motivates the subordinates for higher productivity and achievements. Confidence: The advice and guidance by the leaders create confidence in the group members and they are motivated. High morale: Good leadership increases the morale of the group members which leads to high productivity. Development of the team spirit: Good leadership promotes team spirit which is quite essential for the success of the team or a group. Encouraging initiative: A progressive and democratic minded leader always encourages on the part of the team.

**Stress** is the mental and physical response and alteration by humans' bodies to the real or perceived changes and challenges in their lives. A stressor is any real or perceived physical, social, or psychological event or stimulus that causes the body to react or respond.

**Signs and symptoms of stress** - The symptoms of stress may include the emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physical, memory loss, anxiety development, poor decision-making, unhappiness, agitation, loneliness, body pain, constipation, increased heartbeat,

frequent cold, etc. In addition, irregular eating behavior of too much or too less eating, sleeping irregularities, use of drugs, alcohol, etc. are some behavioral symptoms developed among stressed individuals.

**Hans Selye** has suggested three phases of general adaptation syndrome model (stress model) as follows: **Alarm stage:** The first stage that directly communicates the stress level to the brain through all over the body. In this stage the body try to show that there is element of stress toward an individual and thereby getting prepared to deal with the situation in any of the coping manner of fight or flight responses. It is during this stage that the HPA axis, the nervous system (SNS) and adrenal glands activation would automatically take their actions. **Resistance stage:** The stage where by the body will now try to resist to the stress being alarmed at the previous stage. Here the stress hormone level released may now bounce back to its initial stage or normalcy may be restored in which may reduce the defenses and the adaptive energy that were left. Being the second stage the issue continues to manifest itself and the recovery will try to be in steady process but if the situation continues with slow or no recovery at all ultimately will lead to the final stage. **Exhaustion stage:** The final stage to stress adaptation after been alerted and trying to resist to the situation which indicates the energy exhaustion level of an individual to resist the stress. Here the ability of the body to resist to the stress exhausted. Through general adaptation syndrome an individual has ample opportunity to curve the menace finding proper solution at different stages having relaxation techniques, etc. Several factors influence one's response to stressors, including the characteristics of the stressor.

**Biological factors-** (e.g., age or gender); and past experiences (e.g., already happened events, and their consequences). Daily activities are related to stress. Stressor stimulus can be concrete, for example, downward grade on a test. Interestingly, stress stimulus is in the eyes of the beholder. Different combinations of heredity, life experiences, personality, and ability to cope, make the stress experience unique to every individual. The event as stress for one person may not be stressful to another person. The events that cause prolonged negative stress, such as a natural disaster, can also damage individual's health. Positive events can also have stress. Generally, positive stress is known as eustress. Eustress can strengthen and encourage the individual for performance. Getting married, securing a promotion at work, or winning a competition may be categorized as the eustress. Moderate level of stress helps the people to perform with quality. Stress is found to have impact on health. Negative events generate distress. Distress develops tension and pressures. Distress may include circumstances such as financial issues, relative's death, and relationship breakup, etc.

**Environmental stressors-** Individual's environmental attributes can set off the stress response. Environmental stressors may include, pollution, noise, etc., and uncomfortable living conditions. There may be crime-ridden areas or war-torn regions, where the stress may be developing. **Family and relationship-** Problems with family members are the source of stress. Dysfunctional relationships, marital problems and teens with behavioral problems, chronically-ill family member as well as child with special needs may also be recorded as source factor for stress. **Work stressors-** Work due to its demand for quality and target always remain as a source of stress, particularly, in absence of training and skills. It is also developed due to the factors like, job dissatisfaction, exhausting workload, poor pay, office politics, and conflicts with seniors and co-workers. **Social stressors-** Ever changing social circumstances can also become the cause of stress. Poverty, financial problems, racial discriminations, sexual harassment, unemployment, poor social support, etc. may have impact on quality of life. **Digital stressors-** Ever increasing digital technology is noticed to have stress among the individuals. Mobile, digital gadgets, social media with bombardment of information may also contribute to stress existence.

Sports persons, including athlete and coach, also experience the life events and face the environment in their surroundings. The events and happenings as stressors influence their health. The sports coaches have to work with a team of many members having countless combinations of above causal factors. Therefore, chances are there to experience stress also. However, the style to lead and interact with their team members may be different and as a result the health outputs may also be varied.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Delaney (2016) analyzed ten studies to investigate the impact of stress on sports coaches who can further directly influence the performance and anxiety of their athletes in the team. The findings reflected seven prevalent stressors as found in the literature in the name of performance, resources, many roles and responsibilities, athletes, assistant coaches, and self-imposed demands. The recommended coping techniques for these stressors were mindfulness training, self-talk, goal setting, and dyadic coping. Physical education teacher's coach role conflict in secondary education was examined by Herbert (2007). He interviewed high-school PE teachers who coached basketball. Teachers were asked to record their daily activities with a daily log book. The results indicated that the subjects believed their job was to win basketball games. However, they were not as clear in their specific physical education teacher roles and outcomes. Moreover, the participants reported their focus on coaching responsibilities in order to win games, rather than on teaching responsibilities. Kroll and Gundersheim (1982) surveyed ninety three coaches to examine the circumstances that caused, "concern, worry, and emotional turmoil for coaches". All coaches believed that coaching was highly stressful profession, and the degree of emotional stress experienced on a day-to-day basis was largely the result of the many diverse situations encountered. Stress inducing situations included: anxiety experienced before the start of competitive contests; lack of respect from players; feeling unappreciated by players and administrators; not being able to reach players; use of incorrect strategies; being out-coached; and the public in general.

Frey (2007) investigated the stress experiences of ten national collegiate athletic association (NCAA) members. Findings yielded that communicating with athletes, recruiting process, and having multiple roles and responsibilities were taken as stressors. These coaches also reported that factors including interference with family life, desire for more free time, were stressors that might increase the likelihood of leaving the profession. Taken together, the empirical research demonstrated various challenges that coaches can experience and confirmed the potentially stressful nature of sports coaching. Sullivan and Nashman (1993) studied Olympic head coaches and found that selecting athletes, lack of preparation time, and spending time away from family were the primary stressors experienced during Olympic Games.

The performance of sports coaches are often judged by the success of their athletes. Their future scope of work is also dependent on these achievements. Thus, sports coaches experience stress as a result of the growing demands they encounter (Gould et al., 2002). Stress factors studied by Pastore (1991) were in the form of less time available to spend with family and friends, lack of financial incentives, and increased intensity of recruiting. Also these stressors were reported as the most important reasons for leaving the profession by sports coaches. Thelwell et al. (2008) examined the stressors experienced by coaches who operate with elite athletes. The findings suggested that a variety of stressors from performance and organizational contexts affect coaches.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study is concerned to the sports leaders and coaches and their behavioral patterns. The study design supports different kinds of leadership styles and their relationships with stress or its dimensions. Nature of democratic leadership style and its relationships with physical and behavioral indicators of stress is under the scope of present research. It also examines the manner in which stress may be related with physical and emotional well-being. Sports today is not simply a game, rather it is a career and full of challenges and competition. There are professional bodies investing a huge amount of money and resources towards training and maintenance of behavioral skills among team members and their leaders. The athlete, the coach, everyone in the sports activities is under stress to win the ever growing competition.

The reason to conduct this research is to examine the relationship of leadership styles and stress among sports leaders. Furthermore, the levels of leadership styles and types of stress are to be investigated for their degree of presence among sports leaders. The following objectives were framed to continue with the current research.

### OBJECTIVES

To study the relationships between leadership styles and stress of sports leaders.

To find out various dimensions of stress in the life of sports leaders with different styles.

### HYPOTHESES

There are significant relationships among leadership styles and stress of sports leaders.

There are more than one dimensions of stress experienced by sports leaders following different leaderships styles.

### METHODOLOGY

To achieve the above framed objectives the present research had followed the explorative type of research design by collecting primary data on questionnaires of leadership and stress.

**Sampling-** Twenty sports coaches were selected following simple convenience sampling technique. These sports coaches were from various educational institutions in Jalandhar and Phagwara districts of Punjab province of India.

**Tools -** Scale to identify the leadership styles and stress levels among sports persons were administered among sports persons. Leadership style questionnaire published by Sage, comprising 18 items was utilized to identify styles of leadership. Stress indicator questionnaire from counseling team international was administered on sports leaders to find out the level of stress on different dimensions.

**Data analysis –** Descriptive statistics, mean and SD, were computed to analyze the responses of the participants. Further, correlations were computed for obtained scores to study the relationship among leadership styles and stress as well as among its indicators.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion represent the findings for obtained data on variables undertaken in the study. The analysis is interpreted in accordance of the objectives of the study. Descriptive and correlation statistics were computed to bring out the trends inside the responses of the respondents. Results were tabulated and findings demonstrated by plotting the results in graph.

**Table 1: Correlation among leadership styles and stress of sports leaders.**

Leadership style		Stress	Physical Indicator	Sleep Indicator	Behavioral Indicator	Emotional Indicator	Personal Indicator
Authoritative	<b>r</b>	.045	.036	.050	-.080	.069	.067
	<b>P</b>	.849	.879	.835	.738	.772	.780
	<b>N</b>	20	20	20	20	20	20
Democratic	<b>r</b>	-.476*	-.539*	.219	-.479*	-.292	-.006
	<b>P</b>	.034	.014	.354	.033	.212	.981
	<b>N</b>	20	20	20	20	20	20
Laissez-faire	<b>r</b>	-.327	-.136	-.242	-.594**	-.114	.105
	<b>P</b>	.160	.567	.305	.006	.632	.659
	<b>N</b>	20	20	20	20	20	20

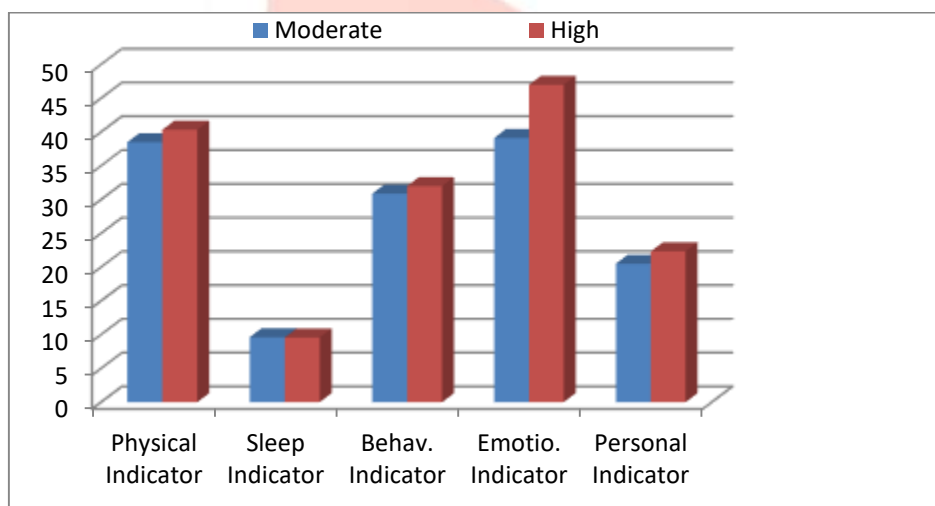
\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

The correlation coefficients between leadership style and stress among sports leaders shown in above table depict positive as well as negative relationships. Democratic leadership style has significant negative correlation with stress in terms of physical ( $r = -.539, p < .05$ ) and behavioral indicator ( $r = -.479, p < .05$ ) of stress. This means sports leaders who follow democratic leadership style experience less amount of stress and they are comparatively physically and behaviorally good. Moreover, democratic sport persons showed the significant negative relationships ( $r = -.476, p < .05$ ) with overall stress. These findings are consistent to earlier researches on democratic leaders. An observation of coefficient values in the Table reveals that there is significant negative correlation between laissez faire leadership style and behavioral indicator ( $r = -.594, p < .01$ ) of stress. Sports leaders with laissez faire leadership style are able to control their stress levels and remain behaviorally more active. However, the relationships between rest of the stress indicators and leadership styles could not reach to a significant level. Specifically, authoritarians were observed having positive relationship except with behavioral indicator of stress. But sport persons with laissez faire style were noticed showing negative relationship with stress and its different indicators. Thus, first hypothesis that there are significant relationships among leadership styles and stress is partially retained.

**Table 2: Various dimensions of stress among authoritative sports leaders**

Descriptive Statistics							
Authoritative		Physical Indicator	Sleep Indicator	Behavior Indicator	Emotional Indicator	Personal Indicator	Stress
Moderate	Mean	38.50	9.63	30.88	39.13	20.50	138.63
	SD	9.91	4.40	6.95	8.23	2.13	23.93
	N	8	8	8	8	8	8
High	Mean	40.33	9.58	32.00	47.00	22.33	151.25
	SD	7.59	3.67	6.90	10.71	5.03	17.96
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12



**Figure 1: Dimensions of stress among authoritative sports leaders.**

**Table 3: Various dimensions of stress among democratic sports leaders.**

Descriptive Statistics							
Democratic style		Physical Indicator	Sleep Indicator	Behavior Indicator	Emotional Indicator	Personal Indicator	Stress
Moderate	Mean	45.57	8.43	36.00	47.57	22.86	160.43
	SD	4.11	3.15	4.89	6.70	3.84	8.75
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
High	Mean	37.90	9.90	30.80	44.90	20.70	144.20
	SD	7.06	3.41	5.88	11.58	4.71	20.01
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
Very High	Mean	31.33	11.33	23.67	31.67	21.67	119.67
	SD	12.34	7.09	6.42	1.52	3.05	18.58
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3

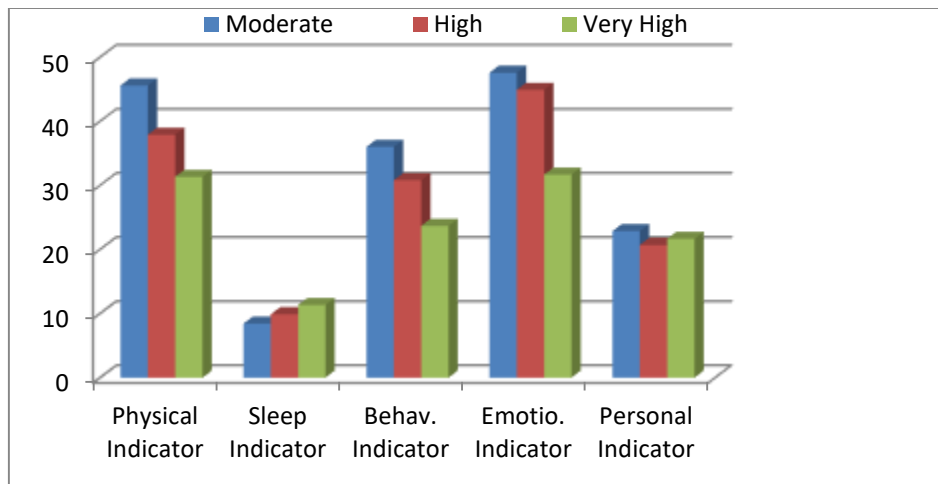


Figure 2 Dimensions of stress among democratic sports leaders.

Table 4: Various dimensions of stress among laissez-faire sports leaders.

Descriptive Statistics							
Laissez-faire style		Physical Indicator	Sleep Indicator	Behavior Indicator	Emotional Indicator	Personal Indicator	Stress
Low	Mean	47.00	17.00	38.00	35.00	17.00	154.00
	N	1	1	1	1	1	1
Moderate	Mean	40.67	8.17	36.67	48.17	21.50	155.17
	SD	3.67	2.63	6.18	8.11	4.50	12.64
	N	6	6	6	6	6	6
High	Mean	38.54	9.69	28.69	42.54	22.00	141.20
	SD	9.98	3.90	5.57	11.15	4.10	20.93
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13

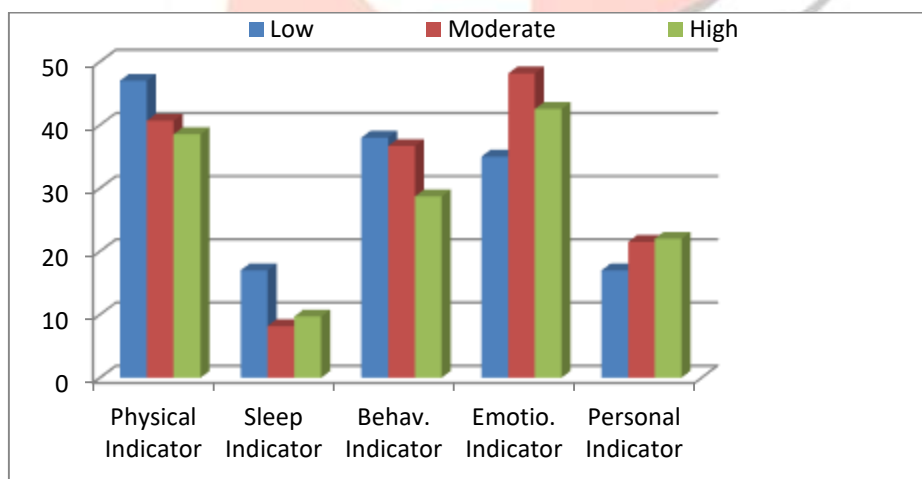


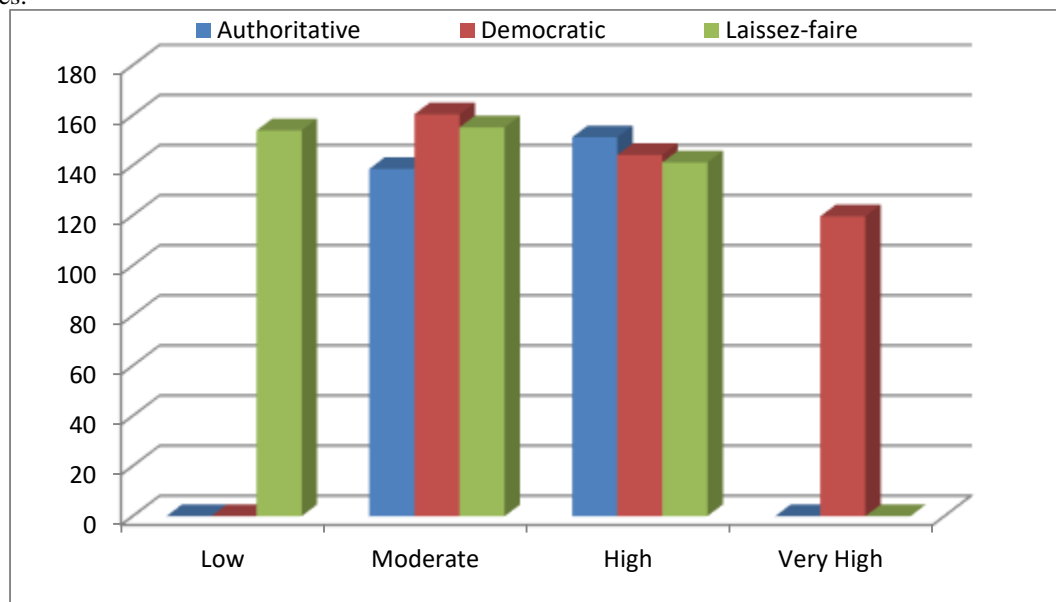
Figure 3 Dimensions of stress among laissez-faire sports leaders.

The five stress indicators' scores spread over four levels of three leadership styles for participant sports leaders tabulated in above Tables 2, 3 and 4 reveal that sports leaders with different styles experienced ample amount of emotional and physical stress. Moderate authoritative leaders showed highest emotional (M=39.13) and physical (M= 38.50) stress. Whereas they were noticed having least sleep problems (M=9.63). Similar trends were also observed for high level of authoritative leadership style sport leaders. They experienced emotional stress (M=47.00) and physical stress (M=40.33) on higher side in comparison to sleep problems.

Again, democratic leaders with moderate level showed emotional indicators of stress on higher side (M=47.57). They experienced the physical stress (M=45.57) more than sleep (M=8.43) problems. The sports leaders with high level of democratic style also exhibited the emotional problem on top (M=44.90) in comparison to rest of the indicators. However, democratic leaders with very high level were noticed to show almost similar problems in physical and emotional dimensions.

Moreover, low level laissez-faire style leaders demonstrated highest physical stress (M=47.00) whereas high level laissez-faire leaders reflected emotional stress in highest amount (M=42.54). Moderate level laissez-faire sports leaders also experienced

emotional stress ( $M=48.17$ ) on maximum in comparison to the other domain of stress. On the basis of above findings second hypothesis is retained that there are more than one dimensions of stress experienced by sports leaders with different types of leadership styles.



**Figure 4: Overall stress among sports leaders using various levels of three leadership styles**

The findings demonstrated the sports leaders having low, moderate or high levels of authoritative, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles (Table 2, 3, & 4). However, majority of the participants followed either moderate or high level of these leadership types. Moderate democratic leaders were noticed with highest stress level ( $M=160.43$ ,  $SD= 8.75$ ) followed by moderate laissez-faire leaders ( $M=155.17$ ,  $SD= 12.64$ ) and high authoritarian leaders ( $M=151.25$ ,  $SD= 17.96$ ). Further, there was no sport leader in the category of low level of authoritative, democratic style and very high category of authoritative and laissez-faire leadership style. Democratic leaders in high category experienced more stress ( $M=144.20$ ,  $SD= 20.01$ ) than laissez-faire leaders in this category ( $M= 141.2$ ,  $SD= 20.93$ ). Sports persons using very high level of democratic style demonstrated least stress level ( $M= 119.67$ ,  $SD= 18.58$ ) suggesting the higher level of democratic style useful in competitive performance.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the above research show that sports persons followed different leadership styles, e.g., authoritative, democratic and laissez-faire. Furthermore, these styles are also followed by the leaders in various amount of implementation. Majority of the participants are observed in high level of different leadership styles. Very few sports person are noticed to be there in low category of any of the three leadership styles. This confirms the behaviour patterns of a particular leadership style by the sports person.

It is also confirmed by the obtained findings that leadership styles have relationship with the amount of the stress, sports leader experienced. These findings are in line with the findings of earlier studies on leadership and stress (Gould et al., 2002; Thelwell et al., 2008; Delaney, 2016). Democratic and laissez-faire types of leaders had almost negative relationships with stress and its various indicators, whereas authoritative styles leaders had almost positive relationships with stress, though these relationships were not at significant level.

Moderate and high levels of all the leadership styles were showing emotional stress on higher side. Also the physical indicators of stress were comparatively higher than sleep and personal and behavioural indicators. All these findings suggest that sports persons should follow democratic leadership style in majority than to the other styles of leadership. Also they should follow coping strategies to resolve the emotional stress. As per the literature available stress is an inevitable part of life and sports leaders also experience stress of different kinds. Their styles to deal with their fellow sports individuals may generate different amount of various kinds of stress. It is essential to understand the nature of stress and follow the relatively competent style of leadership so as to reduce the stress level in day-to-day life.

The current research work was completed within a limited time period having very few participants and therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings for similar population. To examine the styles of leadership for their significant relationship with stress and its all possible indicators a large data set may be collected. In future research the above limitations may be controlled and dimensions of stress and leadership behaviour may be explored to develop an insight towards competitive field of sports.

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