

## Effect of trust in leadership on team effectiveness and performance in Iranian Futsal Super League players

### Efecto de la confianza en el liderazgo sobre la efectividad y el rendimiento del equipo en los jugadores de la Súper Liga de Fútbol Sala de Irán

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of trust in leadership on team effectiveness and performance in Iranian Futsal Super League players. The sample consisted of all the male players of the Iranian Futsal Super League in 2017-2018 (n=163). The participants completed the following questionnaires: 1) Leadership Confidence Questionnaire. 2) Team Effectiveness Questionnaire. 3) Subjective performance evaluation. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The results indicated that trust in the coach had a significant positive effect for the players on team effectiveness (sig = 0.001, t = 5.869) and on team performance (sig = 0.001, t = 7.194). In conclusion, in order to gain the trust of the team, the coaches should be able to make the right decisions in different situations and have the necessary skills and qualities (justice, benevolence, honesty, and ability), which in turn results in higher team effectiveness and team performance.

**Keywords:** Trust in leadership, Team Effectiveness, Team Performance, Futsal.

**Resumen:** El objetivo del estudio fue examinar el efecto de la confianza en el liderazgo sobre la efectividad y el rendimiento del equipo en los jugadores de la Súper Liga de Fútbol Sala de Irán. La muestra estuvo compuesta por todos los jugadores masculinos de la Súper Liga de Fútbol Sala de Irán en 2017-2018 (n = 163). Los participantes completaron los siguientes cuestionarios: 1) Cuestionario de confianza de liderazgo. 2) Cuestionario de efectividad del equipo. 3) Evaluación subjetiva del rendimiento. Se utilizaron técnicas estadísticas descriptivas e inferenciales para analizar los datos. Los resultados indicaron que la confianza en el entrenador tuvo un efecto positivo significativo para los jugadores en la efectividad del equipo (sig = 0,001; t = 5,869) y en el rendimiento del equipo (sig = 0,001; t = 7,194). En conclusión, para ganarse la confianza del equipo, los entrenadores deben ser capaces de tomar las decisiones correctas en diferentes situaciones y tener las habilidades y cualidades necesarias (justicia, benevolencia, honestidad y habilidad), lo que a su vez resulta en mayor efectividad y rendimiento del equipo.

**Palabras clave:** Liderazgo basado en confianza; Eficiencia del equipo; Rendimiento del equipo; Fútbol sala.

## 1. Introduction

The very competitive world of sports is like today's business world, and just like business, team sports success depends on one leader. The purpose of sports is to reach results and success through constant efforts. The winners are strongly driven to the potential victory by the ability to maintain control, order and activity. Regardless of sports discipline, one of the main factors contributing to the success of a team is the figure of a leader (Gulak-Lipka, 2016). In fact, one of the significant pillars of sports clubs are their sports coaches.

A coach as a leader should possess at least medium sports skills and leadership abilities and qualities that can positively influence a team to become successful. These leadership skills mainly consist of the ability to adapt behavior to a particular situation and to the individuals involved (Gulak-Lipka, 2016).

Trust is one of the key areas of Positive Organization Potential (POP). While POP is the base for positive organizational culture and atmosphere, trust is valuable in any organization (Jozefowic, 2013). Trust is an essential and critical element in all social relationships (Barber, 1983). It is also a strategic resource that enables the organization to achieve its goals (Gulak-Lipka, 2016). In team sports, the leader creates trust among the team members, being this a key factor for success (Gulak-Lipka, 2016). Trust is one of the most obvious signs of leadership. When followers trust their leaders, they obey them easily (Shafiepour, 2011). According to Sashkin (1990), trust in leaders is "the level of confidence that employees feel towards the leaders of the organization and the level of trust that employees have in what managers tells them" (Chughtai, 2013). The trust between the coach and the players greatly affects the quality of management, so a low level of trust in sports teams is one of the issues that causes players to underperform (Zandt, 1972).

Butler (1991) mentioned that there are ten conditions

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that make a supervisor trustworthy: accessibility, competence, adaptability, insight, fairness, honesty, loyalty, transparency, commitment and acceptance. Mayer, Davis, & Schoolman (1995) highlighted three more characteristics: ability, benevolence and honesty. In addition, Ellonen (2013) indicated: benevolence, merit and credibility. Also Wong & Cummings (2013) selected three essential traits that help to build trust in the leader: ability, benevolence, and cohesion. In the field of sports, Zhang and Chelladurai (2013) considered justice, benevolence, honesty, and competence as the most important factors that influence the athlete's confidence in the coach:

- 1) Justice: A leader builds the trust in his team as someone who is righteous and fair (Zhang, 2004).
- 2) Benevolence: Mayer et al. (1995) explained that benevolence occurs when "the trustee has some specific attachment to the trustor", and that "the benevolence is the perception of a positive orientation of the trustee toward the trustor".
- 3) Honesty: is the ability of the coach to make the right decisions and to keep the ethical behavior regardless of external pressures (Zhang & Chelladurai, 2013).
- 4) Ability or competence: in coaching it is reflected in activities like developing and implementing game programs, creating goals and strategies for athletes and teams, and encouraging and developing team members.

In the last two decades, organizations have changed significantly, with one of the most notable changes being the shift from individual work to teamwork (Anderson & Burch, 2003; Aparicio, Gil, López, & Díaz, 2016; García, Vegara, López, & Díaz, 2016; Sánchez, González, López, & Díaz, 2017; Sánchez et al., 2019; Zaragoza et al., 2019). The presence of teams in the organization created a great desire to study the teams and team effectiveness. Bateman & Wilson & Bingham (2002) stressed these six important factors in team effectiveness:

- 1) Team synergy: team members share understanding of their purpose.
- 2) Performance goals: there is a clear performance goal established for the team.
- 3) Skills: Team members are sufficiently trained and competent to do the job and can flexibly use their skills.
- 4) Use of resources: all resources, including people, buildings, and equipment etc. are used effectively.
- 5) Innovation: the team is constantly looking for ways to improve their results.
- 6) Quality: There is a high level of customer awareness and the standards are defined and supervised.

Panahi (2008) and Gulak-Lipka (2016) examined the

effects of team leadership, trust and team effectiveness in their empirical study. Sports teams are characterized by intense interactions between a team's coach and its members. Members' trust in the leader improves the team performance (Zhang, 2004). Hassan & Ahmad (2011) said that trust, and in particular trust in leadership, is an essential and enduring component of an organization's success. With regard to sport, Dirks (2000) found that the effect of trust in leadership on team performance is not only significant but also practical in terms of performance, and the role of trust in leadership in sports teams is important. Mach, Dolan, & Tzafir (2010) found that team members' trust with all three focal dimensions (player trust, coach trust, and manager trust) directly and indirectly affect the team performance. Zandt (1972) suggested that in groups with low-trust towards leadership, co-operation and performance are low, and that trust in leadership in a team is an influential feature of team performance. Zuzhang (2004) concluded that coach trust is indirectly correlated with an athlete's perceived performance through commitment and willingness to cooperate. Zhang & Chelladurai (2013) believe that qualities of a coach such as justice, benevolence and honesty contribute to build the trust in coach. Trust in coach can be one of the factors affecting the players and, consequently, team effectiveness and performance. Moreover, the high level of trust in the leadership has a positive effect on the behaviors of team members and their performance.

In spite of the importance of trust in team sports leadership and the important role that coaches can play in the development of futsal, so far there have been no studies on trust in leadership in sports teams in Iran. Therefore, this paper aims at testing the effect of trust in leadership on team effectiveness and performance in Iranian Futsal Super League players. According to the purpose of the study, the hypotheses were:

- 1) Trust in coach affects team effectiveness of Iranian Futsal Super League players.
- 2) Trust in coach affects team performance of Iranian Futsal Super League players.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of all the male players of the Iranian Futsal Super League in 2017-2018 (n=163).

### 2.2. Instruments

The research instruments used were: 1) Leadership Confidence Questionnaire. 2) Team Effectiveness Questionnaire. 3) Subjective performance evaluation.

- 1) Leadership Confidence Questionnaire (Zhang, 2004): It consists of 20 questions measured with a seven-point Likert scale. Azadefda et al. (2013) used this questionnaire and calculated its reliability as 0.86.
- 2) Team Effectiveness Questionnaire: Designed according to the standard team effectiveness questionnaire by Bateman et al. (2002). The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions and 6 dimensions (team synergy, performance goals, skills, use of resources, quality, and innovation).
- 3) Subjective performance evaluation: Obtained from the results of each athlete's response to team performance questions (self-evaluation). The participants evaluated their team's performance from 1 to 10.

To determine the validity of the content and structure of the questionnaires, expert judgment was carried out by 10 university professors of sports management. The confirmatory factorial analysis was used and the reliability of the questionnaires was 0.73-0.78 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient).

### 2.3. Statistical analysis

Firstly, the normal distribution of data was evaluated using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. It showed that the level of significance in the variables of coach confidence and team performance was lower than 0.05, so the distribution of data was abnormal. The significance level in the team effectiveness variable was higher than 0.05, so the distribution of data was normal. In this study structural equation modeling was used to examine the effect of trust in leadership on team effectiveness and team performance of Iranian Futsal Super League players. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to evaluate the relationship between the variables. Moreover, given the abnormality of data distribution, the natural loga-

rithm of team-based trust was used. The data were analyzed using natural logarithm and subsequently the research model was tested. SPSS 23 was used in descriptive statistics and Amos 23 was used to investigate construct validity (through confirmatory factor analysis) and to evaluate research hypotheses (through structural equation modeling).

### 3. Results

According to the results, the youngest participant was 19 and the oldest was 37. The mean age of Iranian Futsal Super League players was 25.52 years with a standard deviation of 4.193 years. Table 1 shows the distribution of the data according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

**Table 1.** Kolmogorov-Smirnov test statistics.

Variables	Statistics		
	Test Statistic	P	Distribution
Trust in the coach	0.074	0.031	Abnormal
Team effectiveness	0.065	0.093	Normal
Team performance	0.138	0.001	Abnormal

**Table 2.** Correlation matrix between variables.

		Team effectiveness	Team performance
Trust in the coach	Correlation coefficient	0.554**	0.425**
	Significance level	0.001	0.001

According to the results of Spearman correlation test in Table 2, it can be seen that there is a significant positive relationship between trust in coach and the team effectiveness (Sig = 0.001,  $r_{ho} = 0.554$ ) and trust in coach and team performance (Sig = 0.001,  $r_{ho} = 0.425$ ). The results of the research model are reported below.

**Table 3.** Standardized regression coefficients and t-values of the research model.

	Path	Skewness	Kurtosis	Factor loading	t value	Sig.
Trust in the coach	<--- Benevolence	0.242	-0.166	0.619	-	-
	<--- Ability	-0.739	0.100	0.475	5.239	0.001
	<--- Honesty	-0.523	498-	0.506	5.531	0.001
	<--- Justice	-0.295	-0.687	0.481	5.295	0.001
Team effectiveness	<--- Team synergy	-0.479	-0.154	0.599	-	-
	<--- Goals performance skill	-0.375	-0.174	0.710	7.260	0.001
	<---	-0.078-	-0.139	0.793	7.827	0.001
	<--- Using resources	0.257	-0.020	0.808	7.921	0.001
	<--- Quality	-0.022	-0.491	0.862	8.237	0.001
	<--- Resources	-0.087	-0.189	0.686	7.090	0.001
Team performance	<--- performance subjective	-0.108	-0.471	0.773	6.362	0.001
Normalized kurtosis Mardia's coefficient				16/107		

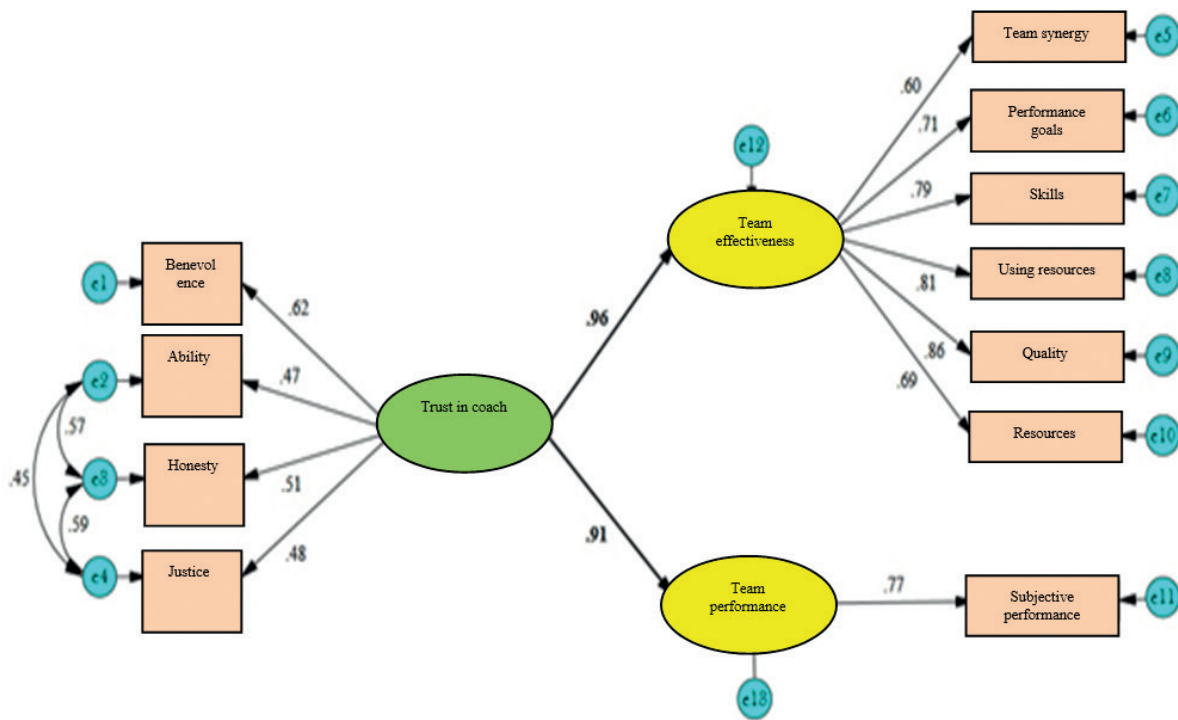


Figure 1. Standardized regression coefficient model.

According to the results of Table 3, it can be seen that regarding the skewness in the values between -1 and 1, and the kurtosis between -3 and 3, the data distribution of the observed variables is normal. Moreover, based on the results of the model implementation, all factor loadings (standardized

regression coefficients) and t-statistic have acceptable values lower than 0.05. These indices showed that the measured and observed variables reflect well the latent variables (coach confidence, team effectiveness, and team performance).

Table 4. The effect of coach trust on team effectiveness and team performance of Futsal Iranian Futsal Super League players

	Path		Factor loading	T value	Sig.
Trust in the coach	<---	Team effectiveness	0.959	5.869	0.0001
Trust in the coach	<---	Team performance	0.911	7.194	0.0001

Table 4 shows that coach trust on team effectiveness ( $t = 5.869$ , Sig 0.001) and coach trust on team performance ( $t = 7.194$ , Sig = 0.001) of Iranian Futsal Super League players had a significant positive impact. The results showed the effect of coach trust on the team effectiveness ( $\beta = 0.959$ ) and on team performance ( $\beta = 0.911$ ).

The results of the fit indices of the relational model showed that the goodness of fit indices (GFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) as the main fit indices were higher than 0.9 showing the optimal fit of the model. Moreover, other fit indices (AGFI, NFI, and IFI) had acceptable values. Finally, based on the values of Root Mean Square Residual (RMR = 0.045) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.076), it can be concluded that the model was well-fitted.

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of trust in leadership on team effectiveness and performance in Iranian Futsal Super League players. The results showed that trust in leadership had a significant positive effect on team effectiveness. Therefore, trust is a coherent mechanism that creates and maintains unity in social systems and it is a phenomenon that enhances organizational productivity. Thus, the development of trust in the organization can help to increase employee commitment and morale, which leads to effective and efficient performance (Amir Panahi, 2008). Indeed, the results show that when the players perceive the coach as a reliable person, he/she stands as a role model. Players can trust the coach endlessly and that leads to the team's synergy,

achievement of performance goals, optimal use of available resources and optimal learning of required skills. As a consequence of victories and achievement of goals, the trust is strengthened and remains a strong value for years. Mike Krzyzewski, coach of the basketball team at Duke University states that “There is nothing more important than the truth because there’s nothing more powerful than the truth”.

Moreover, trust in leadership has a direct and positive effect on team performance, so coaches should look for the ways to gain the trust of their athletes and to have a positive impact on team performance. Especially in team sports, the importance of trusting the leader is essential as the players often look at the coach as a parental substitute. In addition, trust between team members is also very important and the coach can help to build it. The players should see each other as valuable to the team and be able to identify their individual strengths and weaknesses. When they trust each other, they work as one unit, leading to a victory for the team as a whole. According to the results, trust in leadership enhances team performance, so coaches should put into practice the four dimensions of trust in leadership (justice, benevolence,

honesty, and ability). The results are in accordance with those presented by Dirks (2000), Mach et al. (2010), Zand (1972), Qasemi et al. (2013), and Zhang & Chelladurai (2013). Trust, and in particular trust in leadership, is an essential and enduring component of an organization’s success (Hassan & Ahmad, 2011) and it has a positive effect on the attitude and behavior of team members and their performance. Trust enhances players’ will to accept their tasks in the team, so that they can do everything to win. Trust in leadership helps team members to suspend their personal questions, doubts, and motivations and focus on the team goals (Dirks, 2000).

In conclusion, the results of this study showed that trust in leadership had a significant role in enhancing team effectiveness and performance in futsal male players of the Iranian Futsal Super League. To gain the trust of the team, coaches should consider qualities such as justice, benevolence, honesty, and ability and should apply them in their leadership style. The coaches should be able to make the right decisions in different situations and have the necessary skills and qualities. They should encourage players and pay close attention to their welfare, treating them fairly.

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