

The Impact of Transformative Leadership Behaviors of Volleyball Coaches on Team Performance in Higher Education Institutions in China

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of transformative leadership behaviors of volleyball coaches on team performance in higher education institutions in China. The research employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and utilizes the theory of transformational leadership to analyze how changes in coaching leadership behavior affect the performance of volleyball teams in Chinese universities. It explores the influence of transformational coaching on the relationship between team performance and team member development.

The study yielded: 1. The study suggests that coaches excel in taking command, handling challenges, unleashing team potential, and setting clear objectives. The personal attributes of coaches have a positive impact on team development and player growth. 2. The stable development of a team relies on the unity, trust, and efforts of team members, which have a positive influence. 3. Regarding differences in the level of transformational leadership behavior, the research findings indicate that respondents' perceptions of specific transformational leadership behaviors are not significantly influenced by their gender or age. 4. It was found that team performance levels are not affected by gender, age, or school affiliation. This pertains to differences in team performance levels based on respondents' personal profiles. 5. There is a strong positive influence between transformational leadership behavior and various components of team performance. Overall, the study suggests that coaches' transformative leadership behavior can have a positive impact on team performance. While coaches may need improvement in certain areas, the majority of respondents view them as competent leaders. Based on these conclusions, recommendations are made for research on the impact of

transformative leadership behavior of volleyball coaches in higher education institutions.

1. Introduction

1.1 Evaluation Background and Significance

Transformational leadership, as a new leadership model proposed in the late 20th century research on leadership theory in Western countries. In 1978, Burns believed that transformational leadership is a style that pursues higher organizational goals, by changing the values, interpersonal relationships, organizational culture, and behavioral patterns of leaders and their subordinates, to achieve the goal of surpassing the personal interests of the team.[1] In other words, transformational leadership behavior provides innovative ideas and development models. Although there is relatively little research on transformational leadership in the sports field, transformational leadership behavior is a key factor in team development. In the development of Chinese volleyball, volleyball has received stable development and policy support, cultivating a group of excellent athletes and coaches.

This study will apply the theory of transformational leadership and quantitative research methods to analyze the impact of transformational leadership behavior of Chinese university volleyball coaches on the performance of university volleyball teams. This study will explore the impact of transformational coaching on the relationship between team performance and team member development. In addition, it will further explore coach leadership behavior, providing theoretical guidance for enhancing the impact of volleyball coaches changing leadership behavior on team performance and other collective projects in Chinese universities. Intended to provide valuable insights and suggestions for the development of university volleyball teams, and to provide reference for promoting the sustainable development of university volleyball sports.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

After consulting literature, domestic and foreign scholars have conducted in-depth theoretical research on transformational leadership style, behavior, team performance, and team satisfaction. These studies indicate that transformational leadership mediated by various variables can effectively promote individuals or organizations to achieve common goals in different fields. Based on the above theories, this study aims to explore the impact of leadership behavior transformation of Chinese volleyball coaches on the performance of university volleyball teams. Attempt to construct a comprehensive theoretical model that includes multiple variables, including transformational leadership behavior, transformational leadership, volleyball team performance, and team development.

2. Research Review of Transformational Leadership on Team Performance

2.1 Overview of Research on Transformational Leadership:

The concept of transformational leadership was first proposed by Downton, who defined it as the leader using business management skills and their own moral cultivation and role modeling to establish a positive moral example for employees within the organization, in order to stimulate their work enthusiasm and achieve the common goals expected by both the leader and employees. Through literature and research on transformational leadership and team performance, this chapter presents a theoretical framework to provide sufficient theoretical preparation for this study. In addition, relevant terms have been defined and delimited for better research.

In the early 1980s, Burns presented a more systematic theory of transformational and transactional leadership in his work, "Leadership." [2] Burns believed that transformational leadership involved leaders and their subordinates transforming their original values, human relationships, organizational culture, and behavior patterns to achieve higher organizational goals. They have higher motivation and morale, unite and surpass individual interests in the process.

In China, the behavior of transformational leadership is studied in four dimensions: moral exemplar, inspirational motivation, charisma, and individualized consideration.

Moral exemplar refers to the leader setting an example through their own behavior, influencing team members' behavior and attitude, thereby achieving organizational goals.

Inspirational motivation refers to the leader's ability to describe an attractive vision, inspiring employees' work enthusiasm and organizational mission.

Charisma refers to the leader's behavior that can win the admiration and trust of subordinates, thereby inspiring their sense of mission and confidence in their work.

Individualized consideration refers to the leader's concern for employees' personal needs and development, providing targeted coaching and support to promote their personal growth and development. Therefore, this article will use the four dimensions of transformational leadership: moral exemplar, inspirational motivation, charisma, and individualized consideration.

2.2 Overview of Research on Coach Transformational Leadership

Fiedler introduced the contingency theory of effective leadership, shifting the focus of leadership behavior success from the coach's personality to the specific environment that allows the coach to better fulfill their leadership role. This means that in different environments, coaches may require different strategies for their leadership behaviors to yield optimal results. Western leadership research has undergone three stages, all of which have found extensive application in the realm of sports.

Subsequently, Chinese scholars have delved into the study of coaching transformational leadership behaviors, team development, professional skills, and related aspects based on Western theories. Scholars such as Ma Qiwei, Zhang Liwei, and Zong Di Hua have combined psychology with sports training practices to explore the traits that excellent coaches should possess, including professional skills, moral qualities, psychological attributes, and innovative abilities. [3]

2.3 Team Research Overview

The definition of "team" in the field of management has been continuously evolving and improving. Shonk defined a team as a group of two or more individuals who collaborate to achieve a common task. Smith supported Shonk's view, emphasizing the importance of mutual trust among team members before taking subsequent actions. In his book "Organizational Behavior", renowned management scholar Stephen P. Robbins defined a formal team as consisting of two or more related individuals who collaborate with each other to pursue a specific common goal. Drucker viewed teams from the perspective of organizational learning, considering them as the smallest unit for achieving organizational learning, consisting of complementary individuals who work together tirelessly to achieve goals.

2.4 Overview of Research on Team Performance

A team is a group of two or more individuals who cooperate spontaneously toward a common, valuable goal, with each member having a specific role and function. Performance typically includes individual performance, team performance, and organizational performance. In some

studies, performance can be interpreted as the results, abilities, or behaviors of a team. Team performance is also referred to as team efficacy, which refers to a team's ability to accomplish tasks and goals, which can impact the individual satisfaction of team members, their willingness to stay in the team, and the overall development of the team. Currently, there is no universally accepted definition of team performance in academia. From a narrow perspective, some scholars only define team performance from the perspective of tasks, simply defining team performance as the degree and efficiency of a team's completion of predetermined tasks.

This article selects volleyball coaches and teams from several universities in Hunan Province, China as the research objects. Multiple research methods such as questionnaire surveys, qualitative research, and quantitative research will be used to collect and organize necessary research data. Structural equation modeling and other statistical analysis tools will be applied to analyze and refine data, aiming to validate the proposed theoretical model.

Through this study, we aim to further explore the impact of transformational leadership behavior exhibited by volleyball coaches on team performance in higher education environments, providing valuable insights and references for the development of university volleyball teams.

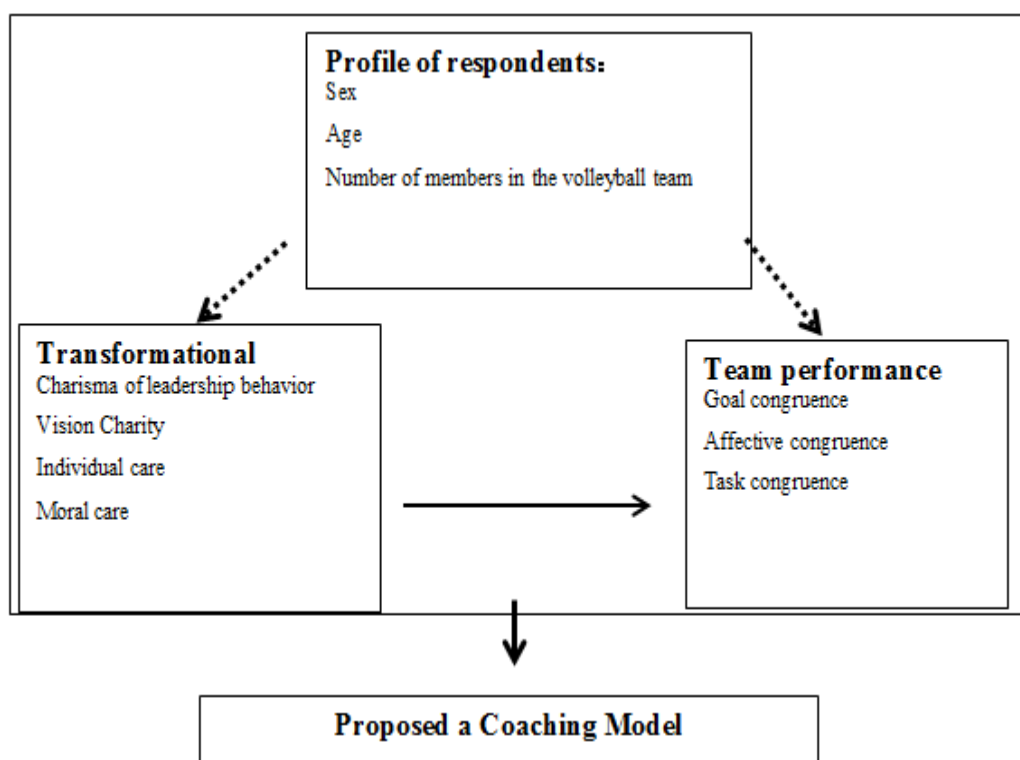


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

The research plan will primarily utilize questionnaire surveys as the main research method to gather input from the identified student respondents for this study. Subsequently, an analysis of the current status and interrelationships among the three independent variables will be conducted, along with an examination of differences in individual factor variables related to the study. Lastly, based on the research findings, addressing existing issues, constructive suggestions will be provided in line with practical considerations, aiming to facilitate feasible strategies for investigating the impact of transformational leadership behavior of volleyball coaches on the development of university volleyball teams.

3. Collected Data, Results, and Analysis Based on Problem Statements

3.1 Level of Transformational Leadership Behavior of Coaches

The following tables present the level of transformational leadership behavior of coaches in terms of charm of leadership coach, vision inspiration, personality care and morality.

Transformational Leadership – Charm as Transformational Leader

The table shows the assessment of the participants towards charm as transformational leader as indicator of transformational leadership. Results revealed that, participants' overall assessment with the indicator is to be Agreeable with an overall mean value of 3.3964. Also, based on the results, the indicator to which a coach can take charge and manager difficult situation obtained the highest assessment with mean value of 3.4332 while sacrificing own interest by the coach obtained the lowest assessment with corresponding mean value of 3.3430.

Table 1. Charm as Transformational Leader

Charm as Transformational Leader	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
My coach can share the joys and hardships with the team and players	3.3791	.67887	Good	Agree
My coach will attribute the fruits of labor and success to the team's hard work and efforts	3.4079	.61651	Good	Agree
My coaches is willing to sacrifice their own interests for the benefit of the team.	3.3430	.62095	Good	Agree
My coach is highly passionate and dedicated to their work, always maintaining a high level of enthusiasm	3.4188	.59412	Good	Agree
My coach is not afraid to take charge and manage, and they are skilled at handling difficult problems	3.4332	.56471	Good	Agree
Overall	3.3964	.53797	Good	Agree

Legend: 1.00–1.50 Strongly Disagree, 1.51–2.50 Disagree, 2.51–3.50 Agree, 3.51–4.00 Strongly Agree

The attribute that received the highest assessment, with a mean value of 3.4332, relates to a coach's ability to effectively take charge and navigate complex situations. This aligns with Bass's assertion that transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to respond proactively to challenges and inspire confidence among their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006)[4]. A leader's skill in managing difficulties is essential in sports, where unpredictable challenges are par for the course.

Conversely, the attribute garnering the lowest mean value of 3.3430, pertains to a coach's willingness to prioritize team interests over personal ones. While still agreeable, the marginally lower score suggests this is an area where participants believe their coaches could potentially show more commitment. Past research has shown that self-sacrifice, often heralded as a significant trait in transformational leadership, fosters trust and loyalty from team members, promoting team cohesion and performance (Yukl, 2010).[5]

3.2. Transformational Leadership – Vision Inspiration

The table shows the assessment of the participants towards Vision Inspiration as indicator of Transformational Leadership. Results revealed that, participants' overall assessment with the indicator is to be Agreeable with an overall mean value of 3.4708. Also, based on the results, the indicators establishing clear goals in motivating the team and the usage of language to encourage teams and inspire players obtained the highest assessment with mean value of 3.4982 respectively. On the other hand, candid conversation by the coach with its players obtained the lowest assessment with corresponding mean value of 3.4368.

Table 2. Vision Inspiration

Vision Inspiration	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
My coach can have candid conversations with players about team development and be confident about the future	3.4368	.59632	Good	Agree
My coach, can established goals and direction for the team to move forward	3.4513	.55362	Good	Agree
My coach use their own positive energy to influence the team	3.4693	.57417	Good	Agree
My coach use language to encourage the team and inspire players to reach their full potential	3.4982	.54921	Good	Agree
My coach establish is clear goals that motivate the team to strive for excellence in both training and competition	3.4982	.56865	Good	Agree
Overall	3.4708	.52576	Good	Agree

Legend: 1.00–1.50 Strongly Disagree, 1.5–2.50 Disagree, 2.51–3.50 Agree, 3.51–4.00 Strongly Agree

Two indicators emerge as especially prominent in this assessment: the coach's ability to use encouraging language to inspire players and their capability to set clear, motivating goals. Both these aspects garnered an identical mean score of 3.4982. The significance of clear communication and goal setting in transformational leadership is well-established. Leaders who articulate a compelling vision and motivate their followers toward it play an integral role in optimizing team performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994)[6]. Particularly in a competitive environment like sports, where motivation and clarity of purpose are paramount, the ability of a leader to set unambiguous goals and use language that resonates emotionally with the team members can make a substantial difference (Yukl, 2010).[7]

However, the data also suggests a potential area for improvement. The indicator with the lowest mean score, 3.4368, revolves around the coach's ability to engage in candid conversations concerning team development while exuding confidence about the future. Openness and forward-looking optimism are essential traits in transformational leadership. As asserted by Bass and Avolio, leaders must offer individualized consideration to their followers, understanding their unique needs and addressing concerns. The slightly lower score in this domain implies that there may be room for coaches to enhance their approach to individual player interactions, ensuring that their leadership style is both visionary and person-centered.

3.3 Transformational Leadership – Personality Care

The table shows the assessment of the participants towards Personal Care as indicator of Transformational Leadership. Results revealed that, participants' overall assessment with the indicator is to be Agreeable with an overall mean value of 3.4195. Also, based on the result, the indicator on frequent communication by the coach and interaction with team members obtained the highest assessment with mean value of 3.5018 while better understanding of personal and family situation of team members obtained the lowest assessment with corresponding mean value of 3.2996.

Table 3. Personality Care

Personality Care	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
My coach creates a suitable growth environment for the team based on the specific circumstances of its members	3.4657	.59868	Good	Agree
My coach has a better understanding the learning situation of team members	3.4368	.57780	Good	Agree
My coach has frequent communication and interaction with team members	3.5018	.53585	Good	Agree
My coach has a better understanding of the personal and family situation of team members	3.2996	.67601	Good	Agree
My coach is willing to help team members solve problems outside of the team	3.3935	.59010	Good	Agree
Overall	3.4195	.52563	Good	Agree

Legend: 1.00–1.50 Strongly Disagree, 1.51–2.50 Disagree, 2.51–3.50 Agree, 3.51–4.00 Strongly Agree

A standout attribute, with a mean score of 3.5018, pertains to the coach's frequency of communication and interaction with team members. This is consistent with the broader literature on transformational leadership. Frequent, meaningful interaction between leaders and followers fosters trust, understanding, and collaboration—factors that are crucial for effective leadership and team performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006)[8]. Particularly in a sports setting, regular communication is essential to gauge players' well-being, understand their needs, and adapt training accordingly (Côté & Gilbert, 2009).[9]

Conversely, the indicator that received the lowest mean score, 3.2996, underscores an area that warrants attention. The perception is that coaches may be less adept at comprehending the personal and family situations of their team members. Such insights can be instrumental in tailoring communication, understanding motivations, and providing the requisite support. Transformational leaders typically demonstrate empathy and understand the individual needs of their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006)[10]. While the mean score still falls within the "agreeable" range, strengthening this attribute can potentially further enhance leadership efficacy.

3.4 Transformational Leadership – Morality

The table shows the assessment of the participants towards the Morality as indicator of transformational leadership. Results revealed that, participants' overall assessment with the indicator is to be Agreeable with an overall mean value of 3.4599. Also, based on the result, the indicator to which a coach helps players to understand future development goals obtained the highest assessment with mean value of 3.4801 while paying attention to players' specialized theoretical learning obtained the lowest assessment with corresponding mean value of 3.4440.

Table 4. Morality

Morality	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
My coach uses both words and actions to help players understand the team's tactical philosophy	3.4549	.54735	Good	Agree
My coach pays attention to players' specialized theoretical learning	3.4440	.54634	Good	Agree
My coach can help players understand future development goals	3.4801	.56190	Good	Agree
My coach uses their personal passion to inspire players and build team cohesion	3.4513	.56656	Good	Agree
My coach patiently guide players, promote individual growth, and help players solve any confusion they may have	3.4693	.55492	Good	Agree
Overall	3.4599	.50363	Good	Agree

Legend: 1.00 – 1.50 Strongly Disagree, 1.51 – 2.50 Disagree, 2.51 – 3.50 Agree, 3.51 – 4.00 Strongly Agree

The attribute that participants regard most highly, with a mean of 3.4801, is the coach's ability to assist players in understanding their future development goals. This observation dovetails with the broader academic consensus that transformational leaders guide their followers toward a clearer sense of purpose and future vision. Especially in the sports arena, athletes thrive when they have a lucid understanding of their progression path, and coaches play an instrumental role in mapping out this trajectory (Weinberg & Gould, 2014).[11]

On the flip side, the attribute receiving a slightly lower mean score, 3.4440, revolves around the coach's attention to players' specialized theoretical learning. While this score remains within the agreeable range, the data suggests that participants feel there's room for coaches to prioritize players' academic and theoretical development more effectively. Given the interconnectedness of academic knowledge and athletic performance, especially in structured sports programs in higher education, this is an essential dimension for coaches to consider (Gould & Carson, 2008). [12]

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the presented study, the researcher drew the following conclusions:

1. According to the profile of the respondents, the vast majority were men, most of them were students at Hunan University of Science and Technology and were between the ages of 19 and 30. To understand the remaining study findings, it is helpful to have some demographic background information.

2. It is claimed that the respondents typically believe their coaches display transformational leadership characteristics in regard to the level of these activities. They think that coaches are good at taking command, dealing with challenges, unleashing the potential of the team, and setting clear objectives. However, there are several areas where coaches may improve, such giving up personal interests for the good of the team, having open discussions about team development, and being aware of players' personal and family circumstances.

3. Respondents generally feel dedicated to accomplishing team goals and believe in continual development when asked about the degree of team performance of volleyball players. Trust among team members, satisfaction with individual performance within the team, and team performance in practice and competition are some of the areas of concern.

4. Regarding the variation in the level of transformational leadership activity by profile, the findings showed that respondents' opinions of specific transformational leadership behaviors are not significantly influenced by respondents' sex or age. The appeal of transformational leadership and inspiration for vision, in particular, are perceived very differently depending on the school affiliation.

5. It was determined that there are no appreciable changes in team performance evaluations depending on sex, age, or school affiliation. This was in regards to the difference on the Level of Team Performance by Profile. This indicates that players' perceptions of various aspects of team performance are not significantly influenced by these demographic considerations.

6. It was discovered that there are strong positive connections between particular transformational leadership behaviors and various components of team performance with regard to the relationship between transformational leadership behavior and team performance. Charm, inspiration for the future, compassion for others, and morality are all connected to many elements that affect how well a team works together. This shows that strong transformational leadership can directly influence how well a team performs.

7. Overall, the research suggests that coaches' transformational leadership behaviors can have a favorable impact on team performance. Despite some areas where coaching might be improved, most responders see their coaches as competent leaders. The judgments of team performance are not greatly influenced by demographic parameters like sex, age, or school affiliation, but there is a strong correlation between certain characteristics of transformational leadership and other team performance components. In order to improve volleyball team performance and leadership, this information can direct coaching tactics and interventions.

5. Recommendations

1. University and sports groups should consider offering coach development programs in light of the research on transformational leadership behaviors.

Coach development programs are essential for encouraging athlete development, enhancing coaching abilities, and fostering a positive sports culture. These programs offer coaches opportunities for continuous learning, allowing them to keep current on the most recent coaching methods, sports science, and leadership tactics. Coaches can more effectively encourage athletes' development, avoid injuries, and promote a climate of respect and sportsmanship by constantly

honing their abilities.

2. Coaches should undergo training on how to comprehend the various backgrounds and personal circumstances of athletes. As a result, they will be able to offer more effective personalized support and promote team members' sense of wellbeing.

To maximize athlete growth, performance, and well-being in sports, individualized player development is essential. It acknowledges that every athlete is different and has particular physical, mental, and emotional needs. Individualizing coaching, training, and resources for each player enables them to realize their maximum potential, boosts their self-confidence, and improves their whole sports experience.

3. Given the significance of trust and team cohesiveness, planning workshops and activities that emphasize trust- and team-building exercises can help team members interact more effectively. Workshops on trust-building and teamwork are crucial for promoting unity, communication, and coherence among team members. These training sessions foster strong interpersonal bonds, enhanced teamwork, and a supportive work environment. These seminars contribute to improved performance, resilience, and general sporting success by fostering trust, collaboration, and understanding among team members.

Team building is essential to achieve cohesion and stability in the workspace. Incorporating team building in your business ensures employees have solid relationships and feel a sense of kinship and belonging. At first, it may take a lot of work to instill team building traits among team members successfully. However, the end result is worthwhile. [13]

4. Setting up regular feedback channels between coaches and players can reveal useful information about the efficiency of coaching approaches and potential areas for development. This can entail conducting anonymous surveys or allowing players to express their opinions in public forums. For continual growth in coaching efficacy, evaluation and feedback procedures are essential. They offer coaches useful perceptions into their areas of strength and development, resulting in more informed coaching decisions and improved athlete experiences. Regular feedback also encourages accountability, self-reflection, and aids coaches in modifying their tactics to suit the changing demands of athletes and the sport.

Having a thoughtful and intentional approach to feedback and coaching with learners, as well as applying evidence-based principles, will not only contribute in a significant way to their developmental progression, but will also provide them with the tools they need to have the best chance of achieving competence throughout their training. [14]

5. Coaches should incorporate ethical education into their coaching strategy given the correlation between morality and team success. Players may learn the value of morality and sportsmanship as a result, which will help them succeed as individuals and a team. Integrating ethical education into sports is essential to promoting athletes' moral growth, good sportsmanship, and ethical conduct. It fosters the development of virtues like integrity, respect, fairness, and empathy that not only assist to create a strong sports culture but also mold athletes into complete people who make moral decisions both on and off the field.

Ethics and Respect training is a critical component of the Responsible Coaching Movement RCM, supporting the development of a healthy and safe sport environment, both on and off the field of play. Education helps a coach develop a proper skill set to deliver age-appropriate training to athletes in a positive environment. It also promotes good conduct and behaviour, and helps a coach understand what it means to act ethically. [15]

6. By encouraging candid and open discussions on team development, coaches should put their attention on fostering the coach-player relationship. Team performance can be enhanced by fostering an environment where players feel comfortable sharing their concerns.

The relationships that athletes develop with their coaches are key to the athletes' success and

satisfaction. Coaches are the people that athletes spend most of their time with. They rely on their coaches for their expertise, guidance, and their judgement about selection for competitions, team and matches. Coaches play other important roles too: they can be mentors and motivators, and they can provide a shoulder to cry on. For example, Usain Bolt, eight-time Olympic gold medallist, admitted that “there is times when you want to doubt yourself, but coach is always there to say, ‘Do not worry, I know what I can do to make you run faster, and what you need to do to go faster’. The connection between a coach and an athlete can influence a large part of an athlete’s life. That is why coaches and athletes must focus on developing a relationship that is effective (liking, caring for, and respecting each other) and successful (helping each other to win/be successful). [16]

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If any, should be placed before the references section without numbering.

Data Availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The author states that this article has no conflict of interest.

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