

Are there Gender Differences in Sport Coaching?

Shelby Anderson, Justine Vosloo, & Sebastian Harenberg

Sport is typically viewed as a masculine dominated domain (Surujlal & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015). Previous research shows that women face many barriers (e.g., sexism, perceived incompetence, job security) in sport coaching (Norman, 2013; Shaeperkoetter, Mays, & Bass, 2017). Yet, there is limited research on what personality characteristics and behavioral differences might exist between male and female coaches. Hence, the purpose of this study was to explore gender differences in NCAA coaches' passion, perfectionism, and leadership behaviors. Three hundred and ninety NCAA (DI-III) coaches completed The Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003), the Leadership Scale for Sports (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), and the Sport Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale 2 (Gotwals & Dunn, 2009). Participants identified as male ($n=231$, 59.5%) and female ($n=157$, 40.3%) and had been coaching for approximately 13 years ($M=12.81$, $SD=9.99$). Male coaches reported significantly higher levels of obsessive passion ($t_{(386)}=2.44$, $p<.01$), harmonious passion ($t_{(386)}=2.48$, $p<.01$), and passion criteria ($t_{(386)}=3.02$, $p=.001$) compared to female coaches. In addition, male coaches reported significantly higher levels of perfectionistic strivings ($t_{(386)}=4.43$, $p<.001$) and organization ($t_{(386)}=3.60$, $p<.001$) compared to female coaches. Finally, male coaches reported higher levels of training and instruction leadership behaviors ($t_{(386)}=3.02$, $p<.01$) and autocratic leadership behaviors ($t_{(386)}=2.66$, $p<.01$) compared to female coaches. The results indicated that male coaches perceived themselves to have higher levels of passion, perfectionism, and leadership behaviors compared to female coaches. The findings warrant further exploration of gender differences in sport coaching. Why do women perceive themselves to have lower passion, perfectionism, and leadership behaviors compared to men? Possible explanations may be the collegiate context or sport in which the coaches are working. As noted, women face many barriers in coaching. Could these barriers be a reason women rate themselves lower on these variables? The presentation will include possible further explanations, implications, limitations, and suggestions for coaches, athletes, and researchers.