EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP STYLE AMONG BULGARIAN FOOTBALL COACHES

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ABSTRACT

Examining the place and influence of emotional intelligence in sports context attracts the attention of a number of researchers. Their surveys are done mostly among athletes and more rarely among coaches. In the last years some researchers have begun to study the relation between emotional intelligence and coaches' leadership style. Authors have found out that emotional intelligence of the coaches was shown to directly predict leadership style and coaching efficacy (Hwang et al., 2013).

The aim of the present research is to study the interdependence between Emotional intelligence and Leadership style among Bulgarians football coaches.

Methodology: The research was done among 172 football coaches aged between 20 and 56 years, who differ in age, license, age group of their competitors, coaching experience, and sports experience as football players.

In order to fulfill the aim of the research we used: 1) Background information, 2) Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS; Schutte et al., 1998), 3) Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS; Zhang et. al., 1997).

Results: The results reveal that the researched coaches possess the greatest skills in managing their own emotions and the smallest – as regards "Perception of emotions". They most often prefer behavior related to "Training and instruction behavior", choose more seldom Positive feedback behavior, and prefer to take authoritative decisions. We found significant relations between the subscales of Emotional intelligence and Leadership style. Our results did not wholly confirm the results found in literature about the role of Emotional intelligence as a predictor of "Positive feedback behavior" and "Autocratic behavior".

Key words: *Emotional intelligence, Leadership style, Coaching behavior, Football coaches*

INTRODUCTION

The realization and management of sports-competitive activities sets serious challenges to coaches. They have to cope with and overcome different obstacles which include problems related to athletes, tactical decisions, decisions connected with selection and issues related to the competitive environment, and in the meantime they have to try to maintain their own optimal psychological and emotional levels (Gould et al., 2002).

In sports context, during trainings and competitions athletes can experience both positive and negative emotions (Hanin, 1997; Jones, 2002). Hanin (2000) suggested that coaches should develop skills in order to recognize and manage their emotions (Hanin, 2000). Totterdell and Leach (2001) found out that emotional regulation could lead to states of optimal efficiency (Totterdell & Leach, 2001).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) created the first conceptual model of emotional intelligence which predicted the successful functioning of people in society. The authors conceptualized

emotional intelligence (EI) as: "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Figure 1. *Conceptualization of Emotional Intelligence by Salovey & Mayer (1990)*

Emotional intelligence is related to important aspects in life such as building productive personal relationships and achieving professional success. It influences the cognitive processes and is a factor for achieving a greater personal success (Romanelii, Cain & Smith, 2006). People with higher EI find it easier to arrange their thoughts according to their significance, to regulate their behavior and to create an appropriate lifestyle in order to achieve the goals they have set (Brackett, Rivers & Salovey, 2011).

There are several conceptual models of emotional intelligence in scientific literature. Bar-On (2006) stated that could lead to contradictions when determining the most appropriate approach if we wanted to differentiate and measure EI (Bar-On, 2006). Table 1 presents the two leading models of EI.

Table 1. *Differences Between Trait and Ability Models of EI*

EI Model	Measurement	Conceptualization
Trait Emotional Intelligence	Self-Report Questionnaire	Personality Trait
Ability Emotional Intelligence	Maximum Performance Measures	Cognitive ability

Mayer and Salovey (1997) developed the ability conception of EI (Figure 2), which has four branches: (1) perception/appraisal, (2) emotional facilitation of thinking, (3) understanding/analyzing emotion, and (4) regulation (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2002) have emphasized EI as a cognitive-emotional ability within an ability frame work that ought to be measured by a maximum performance test (MSCEIT), which consists of performance tasks requiring responses that are evaluated against predetermined scoring criteria (i.e. expert or consensus scoring) (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002).

The other conception of EI uses the trait framework, which argues that this construct is not related to intelligence (i.e. cognitive ability) as traditionally defined, but rather that it is based on personality and behavioral dispositions. Trait approaches to emotional intelligence emanate from emotional behavioral dispositions and encompass self-perceptions in accord to experiences (Petrides & Furnham, 2001).
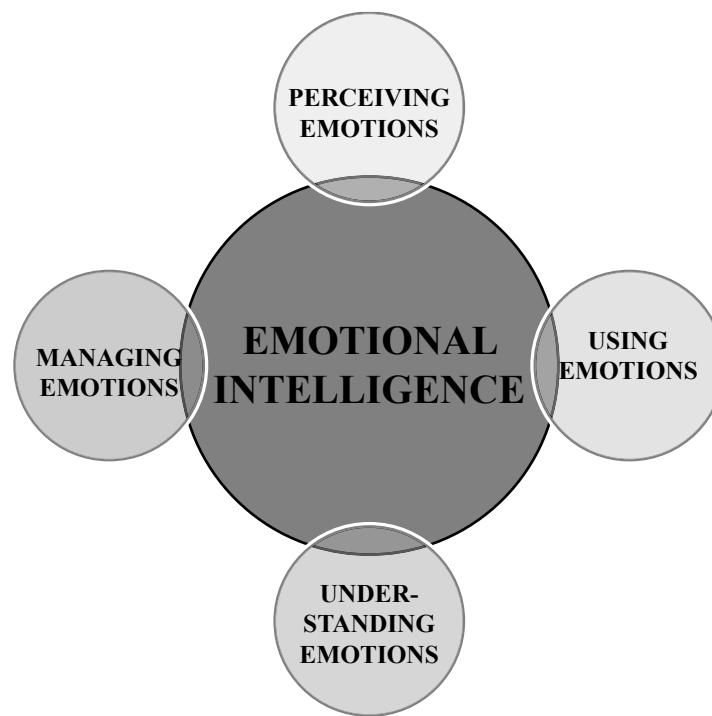
Figure 2. *Four-branch model of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).*

Within trait emotional intelligence, participants reflect on emotional experiences across different situations and report their subjective perceptions. That is, the trait EI measures individuals' perceptions of their typical emotional ability such as regulating, identifying/appraising, and utilizing emotions in a specific situation (Petrides & Furnham, 2001, 2003).

Furnham and Petrides (2003) suggest that participants high in trait emotional intelligence believe that they are in touch with their own emotions and through regulating these emotions, well-being is promoted (Petrides & Furnham, 2003).

According to Petrides and Furnham, the trait approach places EI in the domain of personality, encompassing various behavioral dispositions and emotion-related self-perceptions measured via self-report based on psychometric theory (i.e. Likert scale) (Petrides & Furnham, 2003).

Examining the place and influence of EI in sports context attracts numerous psychologists. Their research is aimed mostly at athletes (Lane & Lowther, 2005; Meyer & Fletcher, 2007; Zizzi, Deaner, & Hirshhorn, 2003), but the influence of EI on coaches' work and efficiency has not been studied exhaustively yet.

Gould et al. (2002) surveyed Olympic-level coaches for coaching effectiveness and identified that, in Olympic competition, being in control of one's own emotional state and masking certain emotions from athletes are just some aspects of a coach's effective performance (Gould et al. 2002). Hanson and Gould (1988) reported that being aware of their athletes' anxiety levels is a matter of great concern of coaches (Hanson & Gould, 1988).

Despite the numerous differences between business environment and sport (i.e. the nature of the aim and context), there are a number of similarities between the two contexts especially as regards coaches' role in the team. Some authors claim that business managers with high levels of emotional intelligence cope better with tension and conflict solving related to work, as well as with recognition, evaluation, prediction and management of emotions

in such a way that they can influence positively and motivate the members of their teams (George, 2000; Jordan et. al., 2002; Jordan & Troth, 2002; Weinberg & McDermott, 2002). Others define EI as one of the characteristics of great leaders (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005).

Athletic coaches are also leaders of their teams just as business leaders. Therefore, just as EI has been shown to be an effective variable in the business setting (Humphrey, 2002; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005), it is reasonable to consider EI as a key variable in effective coaching.

The research done has shown the positive relationship between EI and effective leadership. Some authors (e.g., Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005; Sadri, 2012) said that EI was related to leadership effectiveness and was its key component. Barling, Slater and Kelloway (2000) reported in their studies that EI was associated with many aspects of transformational leadership (Barling et. al., 2000). Higgs and Aitken (2003) related EI to many aspects of leadership and to its ability to predict leadership potential (Higgs & Aitken, 2003).

According to Kerr et. al. (2006) "leadership is intrinsically an emotional process, whereby leaders recognize followers' emotional states, attempt to evoke emotions in followers, and then seek to manage followers' emotional states accordingly" (Kerr et. al., 2006).

A good sports leader is a coach who daily provides his athletes with adequate technical reparation, shows them support and influences their motivation in order to implement the vision of victory (Walach-Bista, 2014).

Barrow (1977) defined the leadership as the behavioral process of influencing individuals and groups toward set goals (Barrow, 1977). Nowadays, Whitmore (2003), defined leadership as the way to unlock a person's potential so as to maximize its own performance (Whitmore, 2003).

Smoll, Smith, Curtis and Hunt (1978) created mediational model of leadership, based on: coach behaviors, player perceptions and recollections, and players' evaluative reactions (Smoll, Smith, Curtis and Hunt, 1978). In this model the effects of coaching behaviors are mediated by the meaning the players attribute to them.

Effective leadership is described as a function of the traits of the persons entering the relationships, i.e. the coach and the athletes, and of the situation (Chelladurai & Carron, 1978).

Chelladurai (1978) developed the Multi-dimensional Model of Leadership. It incorporates three states of leader behaviors: required, preferred, and actual (Figure 3). Chelladurai states that a leader will be more effective if the team's satisfaction with the leader is high. A team which is not satisfied with its leader will not demonstrate the same level of performance and satisfaction. According to the model, leadership effectiveness is a product of the right interactions between leader characteristics (e.g.: interpersonal skills, experience and decision making), athlete's characteristics (e.g.: age, gender, skill level, experience and motivation) and the context (e.g.: group size, type of sport and competition/game importance). If a leader is required to behave in a specific manner (*Required*) in a certain environment and does so (*Actual*), and if this behavior is what is preferred by the group (*Preferred*), then there is a high likelihood that the group will be satisfied with the leader and the way in which they are being led and a higher level of performance result. (Chelladurai, 2007).
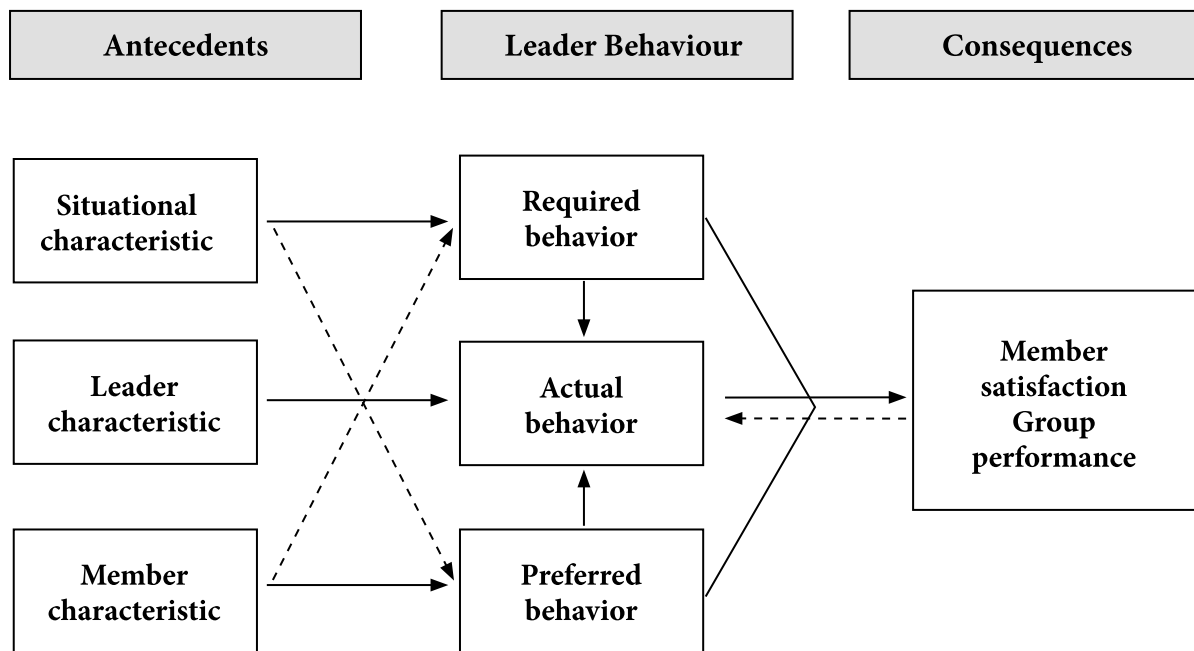
Figure 3. *Multidimensional model of leadership in sport displaying relationship between antecedents, behavior and consequences (Chelladurai, 1978, 2007)*

The leadership style of any coach is a major factor which affects the performance of a person or a group of people, directly or not (Vincer & Loughead, 2010). That is why it is important to predict and analyze the choice of coaching behavior.

Chelladurai and Saleh developed a questionnaire (1980) - The Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS). The questionnaire has three main objectives. It has been used to study Athletes' Preference for specific leader behavior and Athletes' Perceptions of their coaches' behavior. It has also been used to study Coaches' Perception of their own behavior. Each item is preceded with a phrase, for example "The coach should…", "I prefer my coach to…", "My coach…", or "In coaching…", depending the scale's purpose in the particular study (e.g., Required Leader Behavior, Preferred Leader Behavior, or Actual Leader Behavior). The questionnaire includes five dimensions: (1) Training and Instruction – refers to the behavior of the coach that is directed towards improving the performance of athletes (2) Democratic Behavior – refers to whether the coach allows athletes to participate in important coaching decisions associated with group goals, practice methods, game tactics and strategies (3) Autocratic Behavior - refers to the authority and independent decision making of the coach (4) Social Support - refers to the coach's concern for the welfare of his/her athletes (5) Positive Feedback -refers to the coach's behavior of reinforcing athletes and recognizing and rewarding good performances.

Zhang, Jenson, & Mann (1997) used the original model of LSS and created the Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS). The authors retained the original five dimensions but added one further dimension – Situational consideration behavior (describes behaviors aimed at considering situational factors and setting goals for members and determining how they can achieve them).

The research of the influence, significance, and interrelation between coaches' personal characteristics and the choice of appropriate leadership style behavior is very important for the optimization of sports-competitive activities.

Horn (2008) formulated a working model of coaching effectiveness (Figure 4.), and coaches' behavior and expectations, beliefs and goals are in the center of his model (Horn, 2008). The model is based on three assumptions. The first is that antecedent factors (i.e., sociocultural context, organizational climate, and coaches' personal characteristics) influence coaches' behaviors indirectly through coaches' expectancies, beliefs, and goals. Second, coaches' behaviors directly influence athletes' evaluations of their coaches' behaviors and team performance. Finally, the effectiveness of coaches' behaviors is influenced by situational factors and athletes' individual differences
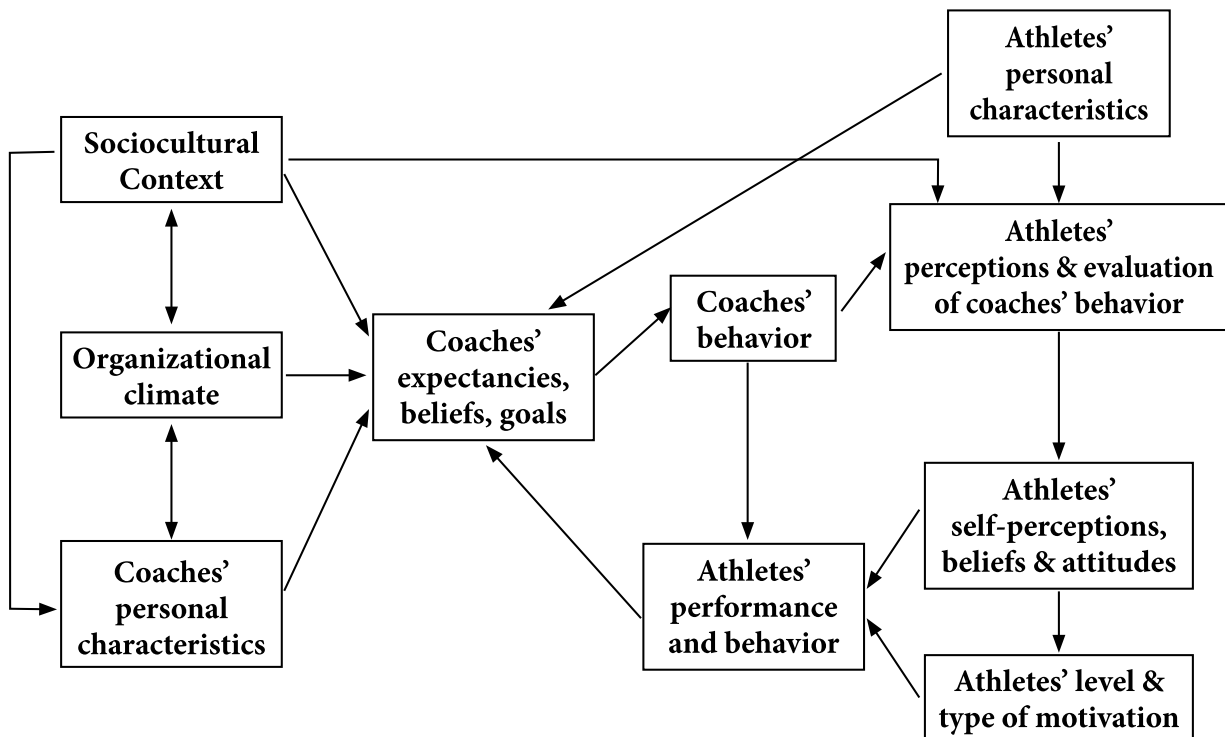
Figure 4. *A working model of coaching effectiveness (Horn, 2008).*

Hwang et. al. (2013) did research with 323 head coaches of high school's basketball team and used Horn's working model of coaching effectiveness.

The aim of the research was establishing the relation among emotional intelligence (EI), coaching efficacy (CE), and coaches' leadership style (LS) which test the mediation of CE in the relation between EI and LS. The authors found that Emotional intelligence of the coaches was shown to directly predict leadership style and coaching efficacy (Hwang et al., 2013).

The aim of the present research is to study the interdependence between Emotional intelligence and Leadership style among Bulgarians football coaches.

METHODOLOGY
Participants

The research was done among 172 football coaches aged between 20 and 56 years who differ in: age (*20-25-year-old – 27 coaches, 26-30-year-old – 32 coaches, 31-35-year-old – 46 coaches, 36-40-year-old – 41 coaches, 41-45-year-old – 18 coaches, 46-50-year-old – 4 coaches, over 50-year-old – 4 coaches*), license (*"C" license – 72 coaches, "B" license – 64 coaches, "A" license – 19 coaches, "B" GK – 17 coaches*), age group of the athletes they

are working with (*6-9-year-old – 23 coaches, 10-14-year-old – 61 coaches, 15-18-year-old – 42 coaches, over 19-year-old - 28 coaches, women – 1 coach, not working at the moment – 17 coaches*), coaching experience (*0-2 years – 70 coaches, 3-6 years – 58 coaches, 7-10 years – 30 coaches, 11-15 years – 11 coaches, over 15 years – 3 coaches*), experience as football players (*0-5 years – 33 coaches, 6-10 years – 53 coaches, 11-16 years – 47 coaches, 17-23 years – 30 coaches, over 24 years – 9 coaches*).

Measures

In order to fulfill the aim of the research we used:

Background information. To obtain appropriate demographic data, we developed a background information questionnaire to ascertain details such as age, gender, the number of years that they have been coaching, and the current level of their coaching.

Emotional Intelligence. The Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS; Schutte et al., 1998) was employed in the present study. The EIS, although totaling 33 items (where items are rated on a 5-point scale anchored by 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), is made up from one factor (Schutte et al., 1998) and four factors (Ciarrochi et. al., 2001). *Perception of Emotions* was represented by 10 items**,** *Managing Own Emotions* was measured by 9 items**,** *Managing Others' Emotions* was represented by 8 items and *Utilization of Emotion* was measured by 6 items.

Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS; Zhang et. al., 1997). The six-factor structure of leadership behaviors is represented through 60 items that are measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Always*) to 5 (*Never*). All items are preceded with the phrase, "In coaching, I…." *Democratic behavior* was represented by 12 items

(e.g., let the athletes share in decision making and policy formulation), as was *Positive feedback behavior* (e.g., congratulate an athlete after a good play). *Situation consideration behavior* was measured by 10 items (e.g., adapt coaching style to suit the situation), as was *Teaching and instruction behavior* (e.g., explain to each athlete the techniques and tactics of the sport). Finally, both *Social support behavior* (e.g., encourage close and informal relationship with the athletes) and *Autocratic behavior* (e.g., disregard athletes' fears and dissatisfactions) were represented by 8 items. These six factors: training and instruction, positive feedback, social support and situational consideration comprised leadership behaviors, whereas the other two comprised decision-making styles of the coach (Chelladurai, 2007).

The scales show very good psycho-metric characteristics in Bulgarian conditions.

Statistical methods

When processing the initial data from the research we used statistical package SPSS 21 and made variation, correlation, comparative and regression analyses.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Figures 5 and 6 present the results from the variation analysis of the subscales of Emotional intelligence and Leadership style.

The data show that from the subscales of Emotional intelligence, "Managing own emotions" or researched coaches' skills to manage their own emotions received the highest result. It was followed by "Utilization of emotions" and "Managing others' emotions". The subscale "Perception of emotions" received the lowest values among the researched coaches. The mean value of total Emotional intelligence was 3.91.

Emotional Intelligence

[Bar chart with Mean values: Managing Own Emotions 4.14, Utilization of Emotions 3.97, Managing Others' Emotions 3.88, Perception of Emotions 3.71, Total Emotional intelligence 3.91]
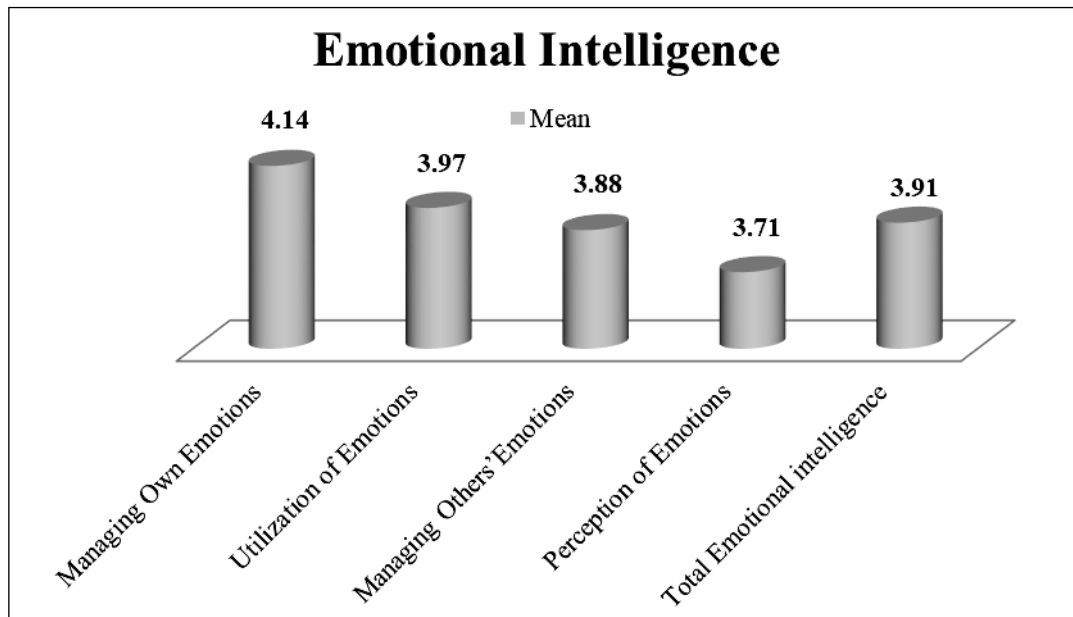
Figure 5. *Emotional Intelligence - Descriptive statistics of study variables (n=172)*

The results from the survey revealed that coaches most often preferred behavior related to overseeing and giving directions and corrections for the team's performance during trainings and in competitions ("Training and instruction behavior" - $M = 4.17$), considering players' abilities and if needed changing the load and difficulty of the different play elements ("Situational consideration behavior" $M = 4.14$). Coaches more rarely chose a behavior aimed at appreciating success and encouraging players ("Positive feedback behavior", $M = 4.04$) as well as giving personal advice to players ("Social support behavior", $M = 4$). As regards the way of taking decisions, the researched coaches preferred to use Autocratic behavior ($M = 3.6$), not Democratic behavior ($M = 3.48$).

Leadership style

[Bar chart with Mean values: Training and instruction behavior 4.17, Situational consideration behavior 4.14, Positive feedback behavior 4.04, Social support behavior 4, Autocratic behavior 3.6, Democratic behavior 3.48]
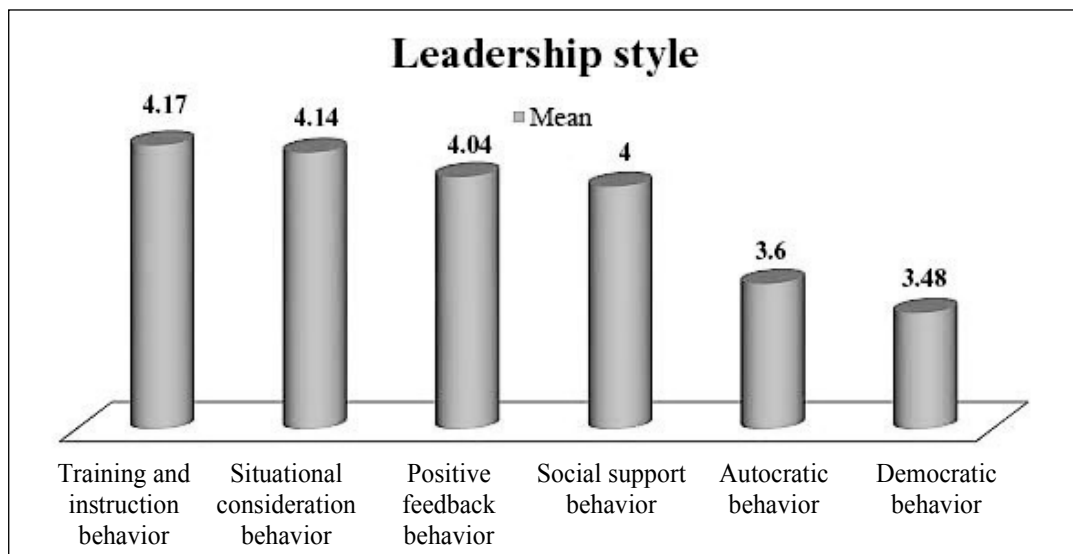
Figure 6. *Leadership Style - Descriptive statistics of study variables (n=172)*

Table 2 presents the results from the correlation analysis among all researched subscales. It revealed significant correlation relationships among the four subscales of Emotional intelligence with all subscales of Leadership style.

Table 2. *Bivariate correlation of study variables (n=172)*

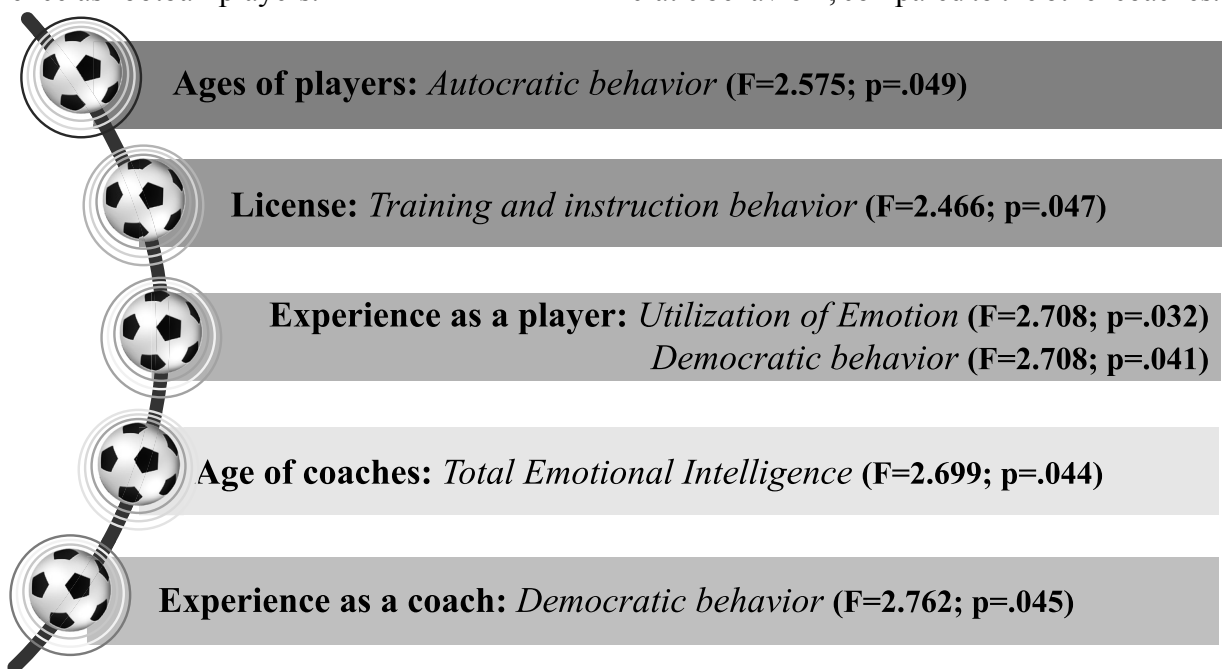|	TEI	PE	MOWE	MOTE	UE	TIB	DB	AB	SSB	PFB	SCB
TEI	1										
PE	.820**	1									
MOWE	.839**	.534**	1								
MOTE	.833**	.568**	.621**	1							
UE	.785**	.515**	.589**	.562**	1						
TIB	.265**	.208**	.232**	.205**	.224**	1					
DB	.396**	.325**	.285**	.411**	.292**	-.136	1				
AB	.324**	.260**	.240**	.306**	.279**	-.016	.527**	1			
SSB	.496**	.341**	.437**	.478**	.384**	.317**	.462**	.270**	1		
PFB	.417**	.285**	.359**	.388**	.357**	.315**	.468**	.269**	.559**	1	
SCB	.437**	.282**	.416**	.354**	.405**	.374**	.440**	.462**	.528**	.469**	1

**p <0.01 level (2-tailed) *p <0.05 level (2-tailed)
Notes: TEI-Total Emotional intelligence; PE-Perception of Emotions; MOWE-Managing Own Emotions; MOTE-Managing Others' Emotions; UE-Utilization of Emotions; TIB-Training and instruction behavior; DB-Democratic behavior; AB-Autocratic behavior; SSB-Social support behavior; PFB-Positive feedback behavior; SCB-Situational consideration behavior;

The comparative analysis of the data revealed statistically significant differences among the researched coaches along all researched parameters (Figure 7). It clearly showed that the coaches with a longer experience as football players (between 11 and 23 years) received higher results for the subscale "Utilization of emotions", but rarely used "Democratic behavior" compared to those with less experience as football players.

There were significant differences depending on qualification. The coaches with "A" license used more often "Training and instruction behavior", unlike those with "C" license.

The coaches who are not working at the moment were more willing to use "Autocratic behavior", compared to others. The coaches with work experience between 7 and 15 years received significantly lower values for "Democratic behavior", compared to the other coaches.

Ages of players: *Autocratic behavior* (F=2.575; p=.049)

License: *Training and instruction behavior* (F=2.466; p=.047)

Experience as a player: *Utilization of Emotion* (F=2.708; p=.032)
Democratic behavior (F=2.708; p=.041)

Age of coaches: *Total Emotional Intelligence* (F=2.699; p=.044)

Experience as a coach: *Democratic behavior* (F=2.762; p=.045)

Figure 7. *Comparative analysis of study variables (n=172)*

In order to reveal more profoundly the relation between Emotional intelligence and Leadership style we used regression analysis. The results showed (Figure 8) that *"Perception of emotions"* influenced *"Training and instruction behavior"* (β = .200 ***) and *"Democratic behavior"* (β = .212 ***). *"Managing own emotions"* stimulated *"Social support behavior"* (β = .473 ***) and *"Situation consideration behavior"* (β = .257 ***). *"Managing others' Emotions"* and *"Utilization of Emotions"* stimulated *"Social support behavior"* (β = .478 ***) and *"Situation consideration behavior"* (β = .405 ***) respectively.
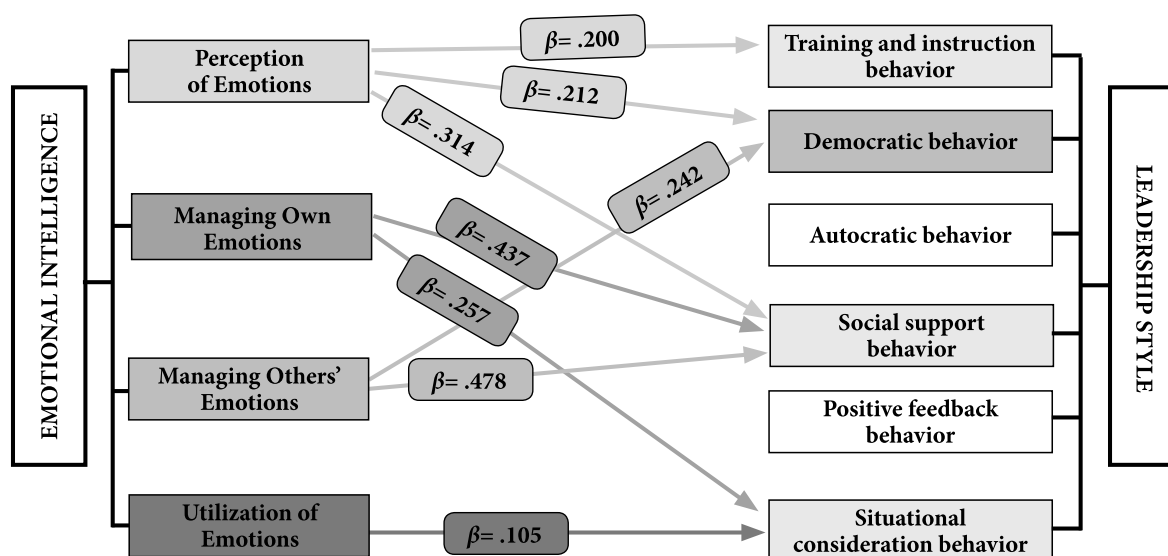

Figure 8. *Regression analysis of study variables (n=172)*

DISCUSSION

The obtained results from our research reveal that the researched coaches possess the highest skills for managing their own emotions "Managing own emotions". The lowest results were established as regards "Perception of emotions". These results correspond to those published in literature (Ciarrochi, et. al., 2001). The indexes for „Total Emotional intelligence" are similar to those received by other authors who researched athletes (Zizzi et. al., 2003; Vaughan & Laborde, 2017).

Our data show that coaches prefer more often behavior related to giving instructions during the training process and correction about the team's performance during trainings and in competitions ("Training and instruction behavior"). They tend to consider their players' abilities and to change the load and difficulty of the different play elements ("Situational consideration behavior"). It is interesting that coaches more rarely choose behavior appreciating their players' success and encouraging them ("Positive feedback behavior") and prefer to take authoritative decisions.

The results from the correlation analysis revealed significant relations among the subscales of Emotional intelligence and Leadership style. Our data correspond to those found in literature (Rahman et. al., 2012; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017).

The comparative analysis showed statistically significant differences along all factors – coaching experience, experience as a football player, license, age, age of the athletes the coaches are working with. There are significant differences along the researched indexes depending on the coaches' experience as football players. Those with longer experience as football players have the best skills for „Utilization

of emotions", but use most rarely „Democratic behavior", compared to the coaches with less experience as football players.

We established statistically significant differences along the factor age of the coaches as regards "Total Emotional intelligence". The coaches aged between 31 and 40 and 46 and 50 had significantly higher results compared to those aged 20-25 years. Gioldasis et al. (2013) found that younger coaches preferred to take authoritative decisions, and older ones – democratic decisions (Gioldasis et al., 2013). Milek et. al., (2011) confirmed that older football coaches preferred „Democratic behavior" more than their younger peers (Milek et. al., 2011). Our data did not show statistical differences in the way of taking decisions.

The coaches with "A" license had significantly higher results as regards "Training and instruction behavior", unlike those with "C" license. We assume this was due to their better qualification and competence in the field.

The results show that the coaches who are not working at the moment are more willing to use "Autocratic behavior", compared to others. The coaches with work experience between 7 and 15 years have lower values for "Democratic behavior", compared to the other coaches. These data differ from the ones received by Gioldasis et al. (2013), according to whom coaches with longer work experience preferred to use "Democratic behavior" (Gioldasis et al., 2013).

Horn's (2008) working model of coaching effectiveness shows that coaches' personal characteristics influence indirectly coaching behavior, and Hwang et. al. (2013) suggested a direct way from coaches' characteristic to behavior. The authors claimed that coaches' evaluations about their emotions may directly influence their perceptions of leader behavior (Hwang et. al., 2013). Jordan & Troth (2002) stated that leaders with high emotional intelligence made better decisions in difficult social situations (Jordan & Troth, 2002). This finding implies that coaches who have higher sense in regulating their own emotion to keep a positive mood and identifying athletes' emotional states (e.g. burnout, boredom, and anxiety level) are likely to demonstrate "positive feedback behavior" (e.g. encouraging an athlete after a mistake and complimenting properly), "situational consideration behaviors" (e.g. selecting an athlete for the appropriate game position and differentiating coaching style at different skill levels), and "training and instructional behavior" (e.g. planning training schedule and evaluating the performance of the athletes) (Hwang et. al., 2013). Milek et. al., (2011) added that coaches who reported higher well-being, emotionality, self-control or social competence also claimed to provide more „social support behavior" (Milek et. al., 2011).

The received data from the regression analysis partially confirm the data in literature. According to the results from our research the subscales of Emotional intelligence do not predict "Positive feedback behavior" and "Autocratic behavior".

We should point out some limitations of our research. It was done only among football coaches which means that the results could not be applied to all coaches in general. Future research with more coaches from different kinds of sport could cast more light on this very important for theory and practice issue.

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