



Model of the mediating effect of team pride in the relationship between transformational leadership and sports activity loyalty

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Abstract

Objective: Athletes participate in sports with affection and attachment. Although the dependence of people's perception of sports activity loyalty on environmental factors has been investigated, the relationship between sports activity loyalty's psycho-sociological variables is not yet well-understood. The current study aims to test the relationships among transformational leadership, pride, and sports activity loyalty perceived by Taekwondo athletes. **Methods:** Transformational leadership, pride, and sports activity loyalty were measured in 263 college Taekwondo athletes who participated in the 29th National University Taekwondo Individual Championships in 2022. SPSS 23.0, PROCESS Macro (V.2.13), and Amos 23.0 programs were used for data analysis. **Results:** Transformational leadership exerted a positive influence on sports activity loyalty in Taekwondo athletes and a positive influence on authentic pride; however, it decreased hubristic pride. Authentic pride exerted a positive influence on sports activity loyalty but had no effect on hubristic pride. By verifying the mediating effect based on the direct effect, it was proven that transformational leadership was a factor which positively affected sports activity loyalty by mediating authentic pride. **Conclusions:** The results of this study imply that it is necessary to strengthen sports activity loyalty by respecting athletes' opinions, enhancing their autonomy, and improving their authentic pride of the athletes by demonstrating transformational leadership in the Taekwondo community to perceive the athletes' sports activity loyalty.

Keyword: transformational leadership, sports activity loyalty, socialization into sports, participation sports, PROCESS Macro

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INTRODUCTION

Sports can be experienced through both direct participation and audience participation via the media, classified as direct and indirect experiences [1]. Generally, humans retain more positive memories of participation via direct experiences. Existing studies [2,3] explained that the participants' sports activity loyalty is found to be high only when five sports parameters (i.e., stadium parking, stadium cleanliness, perceived crowding, food service, and fan control) are systematically managed. This finding indicates that sports activity loyalty can be increased via people's participation in physical activity, the acquisition of technology by the participants, a sense of accomplishment, participation needs, efforts, and commitment through various environmental factors.

Numerous studies on sports loyalty have reported that the service quality of sports programs [4], sports sponsorship [5], etc. are of significantly relevant to sports loyalty. Furthermore, significant associations between transformational leadership and sports loyalty [6] and between transformational leadership and sports commitment [7] in psycho-sociological sports aspects have been theoretically verified. Thus, the current study seeks to test the relationship between transformational leadership and sports activity loyalty by postulated transformational leadership as an independent variable.

Prior study [8] emphasized the process of communication and team cohesion to explain transformational leadership and exercise performances. Also, the coach's transformational leadership was found to reduce the turnover intention of softball and volleyball participants in earlier studies [9]. In a track and field game in the US, existing studies [10,11] discovered that when sports department subordinates evaluate the transformational leadership of their chief sports directors, both male and female transformational leaders stimulate the staff's efforts and raise the satisfaction in the leader. Based on previous studies, it is reasonable to assume that transformational leadership can positively affect sports activity loyalty.

We intend to identify variables which can mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and sports activity loyalty. Many scholars have conducted numerous studies on shame, guilt, pride, etc., over the last 20 years [12]. These psychological emotions are vital because they significantly influence moral judgment, social behavior, and subjective aspects of performance [13-15] however, the importance of these emotions in the lifetime developmental process remains relatively unknown. This study aims to determine the causal relationship among these variables by postulating pride as the mediating variable.

Explained pride as the dichotomy of "authentic pride" and "hubristic pride." [16] Authentic pride is the preference for a relational attitude and is significantly relevant to passion, social behavior and the behaviors of helping or supporting others and pursuing success [17,18]. Hubristic pride is an emotional attitude based on the belief in hubris, which stems from the negative characteristics of selfishness and arrogance [16]. Hubristic pride has been reported to be significantly related to drug abuse, physical aggression [19], the tendency to disregard others [17], etc. the current study aims to expand the theoretical extension and suggest a new research model by verifying the mediating effect of pride in the relationship between transformational leadership and sports activity loyalty.

In conclusion, various previous studies have reported that transformational leadership can positively impact the dependent variable. In the relationship between the two variables, we attempt to verify how the pride of team athletes influences sports activity loyalty. While the relevance of sports activity loyalty was investigated from the aspect of sport management aspect this study study focuses on verifying the relevance of variables from the psycho-sociological aspects of sports. Especially, this is the first study in Korea which attempts to suggest a research model with pride as the mediating variable for Taekwondo athletes. If this study produces meaningful results, it will highlight the necessity of developing a pride scale applicable to elite Korean athletes. the current study therefore aims to use pride to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership in Taekwondo athletes and sports activity loyalty. The research hypothesis is as follows.

First, Transformational leadership will have a significant effect on the sports activity loyalty. Second, Transformational leadership will have a significant effect on pride. Third, Pride will have a significant effect on the sports activity loyalty. Fourth, Transformational leadership will mediate pride and have a significant effect on the sports activity loyalty.

METHODS

Participant

A total of 263 college Taekwondo athletes who participated in the 29th National University Taekwondo Individual Championships in 2022 were selected as research participants. The participants were recruited using nonprobability sampling method. A total of 263 participants were used for the data, with 213 men (81%) and 50 women (19%) athletes. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Boards (JJNU-IRB-2022-029).

Procedure

Transformational leadership

The questionnaire developed by Carless, Wearing, Mann [20] was used, which composed of 7 items and uses a 5-point Likert type scale. The Cronbach's Alpha value was .97. The suitability index score for the confirmatory factor analysis was adequate ($\chi^2 = 30.631$, $df = 13$, $p < 0.001$, $Q = 2.356$, $IFI = 0.992$, $TLI = 0.987$, $CFI = 0.992$, $RMSEA = 0.072$).

Pride

The questionnaire developed by Tracy, Robins [16] was used, which composed of 14 items and uses a 5-point Likert type scale. The Cronbach's Alpha value was authentic pride 0.91, hubristic pride 0.93. The Suitability Index Score for the confirmatory factor analysis was adequate ($\chi^2 = 161.889$, $df = 53$, $p < 0.001$, $Q = 3.055$, $IFI = 0.953$, $TLI = 0.941$, $CFI = 0.953$, $RMSEA = 0.089$).

Sport activity loyalty

The scale developed by Yang [21] was used. This scale was asked to respond on a 10-item 5-point Likert rating scale with commitment and attachment to sports. The Cronbach's Alpha 0.94. The Suitability Index Score for the confirmatory factor analysis was adequate ($\chi^2 = 58.199$, $df = 17$, $p < 0.001$, $Q = 3.423$, $IFI = 0.976$, $TLI = 0.960$, $CFI = 0.976$, $RMSEA = 0.096$).

Statistical analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0, SPSS PROCESS Macro, and Amos 23.0 statistical programs. First, a frequency analysis was conducted. Second, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated to check the reliability of each measurement tool, and confirmatory factor analysis were performed to find out the validity of the constructs. Third, Pearson's product-moment correlation was calculated on major variables. Fourth, SPSS PROCESS Macro [22] was used to explore the mediating effect of pride in the relationship between transformational leadership and sport activity loyalty (Model No. 4.). We used 95% Confident intervals (C.I.) and alpha level of 0.05 for significance tests.

RESULTS

Presents the calculated average, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and correlation coefficient of the variables extracted from exploratory factor analysis Table 1. Descriptive statistics of study variables including mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis are listed in Table 1. The data showed normal distribution as skewness and kurtosis fell between recommended ranges, from -2 to +2 and from -7 to +7, respectively [23]. Correlations were performed to examine overall relationships between variables, and all variables were found to be correlated below 0.69 (see Table 1).

Path analysis of dimensions of transformational leadership, pride, and sport activity loyalty

Presents the relationship among transformational leadership, pride, and sport activity loyalty. transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on authentic pride and a significant negative effect on hubristic pride. transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on sport activity loyalty. As a result of confirming the influence of the mediating variable on the dependent variable, authentic pride had a significant positive effect on sport activity loyalty (see Figure 1).

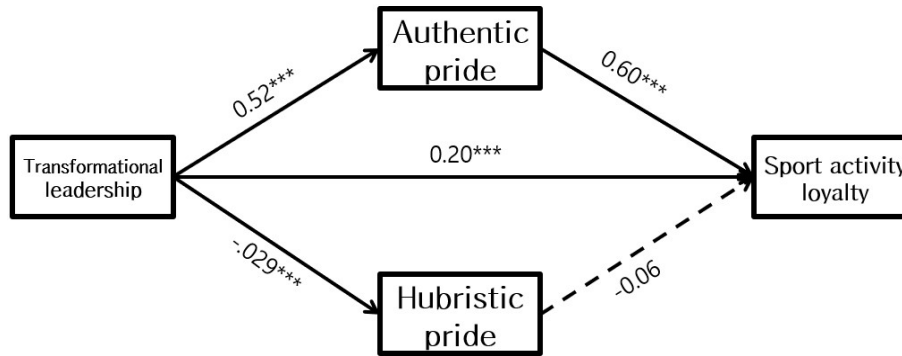


Fig 1. Finalized Hypothesized Model

Table 1. Correlation coefficients between measurement variables.

Variable	Transformational leadership	Authentic pride	Hubristic pride	Sport activity loyalty
Authentic pride	0.56**	-		
Hubristic pride	-0.26**	-0.19**	-	
Sport activity loyalty	0.54**	0.69**	-0.23**	-
Mean ± Standard Deviation	4.09±0.84	3.72±0.77	2.07±0.93	3.93±0.79
Skewness	-0.67	-0.01	0.78	-0.26
Kurtosis	-0.09	-0.56	0.18	-0.52

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 2. Direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership, pride, and sport activity loyalty.

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Total Indirect Effect	Indirect Effect	
					Authentic pride	Hubristic pride
		Coeff (SE) t	Coeff (SE) t	Effect (SE) (LL~UL)	Effect (SE) (LL~UL)	Effect (SE) (LL~UL)
Transformational leadership	Sport activity loyalty	0.06(0.05) 10.32***	0.20(0.04) 3.87***	0.31(0.04) (0.24~0.40)	0.30(0.04) (0.23~0.37)	0.02(0.01) (-0.01~0.05)

LL~UL: Bias-Corrected 95% Confidence Interval (Low Limit~Upper Limit)

Testing mediating effects of pride in the relationship between transformational leadership and sport activity loyalty

Presents the results of an examination of the mediating effect of the pride in the relationship between the transformational leadership and sport activity loyalty (see Table 2). The transformational leadership has a significant mediating effect on sport activity loyalty via authentic pride (C.I. 0.23~0.37). On the other hand, there is no mediating effect on sport activity loyalty via hubristic pride (C.I. -0.01~0.05). As for the total indirect effect of transformational leadership on the dependent variable via the mediating variable were significant (C.I. 0.24~0.40).

DISCUSSION

Affection for and attachment to sports are essential to the improvement of sports activity loyalty. This loyalty can likely be experienced through various environmental factors, such as sports fan loyalty [24], loyalty to sports participation services [25], sports brand loyalty [26], and sports service quality loyalty [27]. This study will postulate psycho-sociological variables, which can perceive sports activity loyalty to the sports category practiced by actual athletes, as antecedents to verify the relationships between them. These relationships are expected to potentially be utilized as a new

research model to contribute to expanding the theoretical basis and developing social behavior and happiness variables pertinent to athletes' sports participation.

First, meaningful results were obtained by analyzing the direct effect of the independent variable. In their study [28], surveyed 196 sports personnel in U.S. colleges and found that transformational leadership had a positive influence on organizational commitment. In another study [29], surveyed 385 regular and part-time employees in the U.S. and found that transformational leadership stresses loyalty to the organization based on commitment to the latter. These findings support this study.

These studies emphasize the necessity of employing the strategy of helping athletes develop an attachment to their respective organizations through transformational leadership and supporting athletes in enabling committed participation for future athletes. Athletes can pursue autonomy over coercive behavior and positively gain the desire to participate in sports, resulting in sports activity loyalty through transformational leadership which values the respect of athletes' opinions, which was a surprising finding.

In a previous study, Simon [30], surveyed 145 MBA candidates at two colleges in China's Xian Province and found that transformational leadership has a positive influence on team subordinates' pride. The study [31] examined the relevance between pride and respect between transformational leadership and organizational commitment, and its findings supported the results of this study. In other words, transformational leadership evidently induces athletes' attachment and self-esteem toward their team by protecting and respecting their organization. Such pride is an emotion that isn't experienced exclusively by athletes, but also by team managers and athletes' parents and colleagues. Maintaining pride by managing transformational leadership is paramount.

The study discovered that genuine pride has a significant impact on sports activity loyalty by demonstrating a significant association between pride and workplace emotions by researching 933 professional sports workers [32]. Authentic pride in an organization was found to support athletes in feeling an attachment to their team and develop emotional intelligence, thereby engendering a sense of loyalty to their respective teams and participating categories.

As a result of verifying the mediating effect of pride based on the indirect effect, authentic pride was found to have a significant indirect effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and sports activity loyalty. In their study, surveyed 296 athletes and found that pride had a significant mediating effect on the relationship between passion and moral disengagement [33]. In another study, surveyed 648 football fans at the 2016 Copa América Centenario and found that self-esteem had a meaningful mediating effect on the relationship among social trust, self-transcendent aspiration, and subjective well-being [34]. These studies demonstrate the fact that team pride plays an integral role as a mediating variable.

To summarize, transformational leadership in Korea's college Taekwondo athletes, supports them in actively participating in Taekwondo with passion and enthusiasm. In addition, athletes who participate in training while understanding their respective psychological and physical states have high authentic pride which signifies an attachment to their teams and reduced hubristic pride associated with conflicts within their teams and disregard for competitors. It is worth mentioning that we have achieved a globally noteworthy result the discovery of an antecedent in which sports activity loyalty can be actively supported by authentic pride, as long as transformational leadership is demonstrated and athletes are vigorously supported in experiencing authentic pride. These outcomes are critical in the psycho-sociological aspects of sports.

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership in Korean Taekwondo athletes was found to exert a positive influence on authentic pride and reduce hubristic pride. Authentic pride had a positive influence on sports activity loyalty. It was proven that transformational leadership is an antecedent which reinforces sports activity loyalty by mediating authentic pride based on the direct effect. Our conclusion that attachment to a given sports activity is caused by transformational leadership and pride suggests the importance of leaders' transformational leadership behavior in reinforcing athletes' authentic pride in sports.

SUGGESTIONS

Despite demonstrating a causal relationship among new variables through the SPSS PROCESS Macro model verification, this study has certain limitations. First, since the research subjects were limited to Taekwondo athletes at Korean universities, there are limitations in generalizing the study's results to athletes in all sports categories. Hence, sports activity loyalty according to pride should be investigated in follow-up studies for combat sport and ball game athletes. Second, studies [35-38] indicate that women's performance-related pride was found to be higher than men's. Hence, future studies must strive to establish the association between pride and sports activities according to gender. Based on our findings, we suggest that transformational leadership could help athletes develop authentic pride rather than hubristic attitudes toward other athletes and their teams. Moreover, the social-behavioral variable of transformational leadership can exert a tremendous influence in expanding the theoretical extensions among various dependent variables.

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