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The Relationship Between Weightlifting Trainers' Leadership Characteristics and their Leadership Strength as per the Perceptions of Athletes

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Abstract

The research was designed with correlational research model, one of the quantitative approaches. In the selection of the research group, purposeful sampling approaches and convenience sampling method were applied. The research group consists of 351 weightlifters, 136 women and 215 men. The data were obtained using the "Personal Information Form", "Sports Leadership Scale (SLS)" and "Sport Leadership Strength Scale-Other (SLSS-O)". Relevant Statistical analysis was applied to interpret the data. Consequently, low-level positive correlations between SLS and all sub-dimension mean scores of SLSS-O were determined.

Introduction:

A trainer is described as a sportsperson who assembles the corporate knowledge and experiences he has acquired in his professional life, guides the athletes according to their abilities, trains them and prepares them for competitions. Although unwritten, trainers' job descriptions also include leading the athletes (Dogan, 2005). Leadership is conceptually defined as the process of leading individuals or a group by influencing a common goal. The person carrying out this process is called the leader (Barrow, 1977). When we talk on the factors that cause a leader to be effective, it is essential to consider the concept of power to refer to the process of influencing subordinates, superiors and other stakeholders. Power is also an inevitable part of the organisation process (Zaleznik, 1998). Power is an integral part of leadership as leadership is defined as the necessity of power employed to influence individuals in this organisational and a kind of social influence process (Northouse, 2007).

French & Raven (1959) suggested that there are five different power factors. "Reward Power (1)" is the ability to reward group members. "Coercive power (2)" is the ability to apply one or more punishment methods if necessary. "Legitimate power (3)" is the ability of a person to exercise his or her authority and position over an organisation, group or team. "Expert power (4)" is to be equipped on a subject-specific to a particular area. "Referent power (5)" is the power possessed by those who follow the leader or those who are loved and respected by group members (French & Raven, 1959).

Chelladurai (1984), associating power factors with leadership behaviours, stated that authoritarian leader behaviours are similar to actions, coercive power and legitimate power, democratic behaviours, expert power, social support approach, referent power, positive feedback and reward power. In addition to these data, in many studies, coercive and reward powers, referent power with social support, legitimate and expert powers with internalisation, legitimate, reward and coercive powers with the position, Self-Leadership personal power and expert power have been associated with obedience (Kelman, 1958; Yukl & Falbe 1991; Slack, 1997; Gayretli & Çelik, 2020).

When the perception of the power of the leader by the group members is considered within the organisation, it is understood that individual or organisational factors play a significant role in the perception of this power more or less. Factors such as corporate culture, climate or personality traits of the leader are influential on perceived power (Meydan, 2010). As a leader, the power of a trainer over the organisation formed in the sports environment is also critical in this context. Based on the relevant data, our study aimed to examine the relationship between weightlifting trainers' leadership strength and leadership traits in line with the perceptions of athletes.

Methodology:

Within the scope of this quantitative research, a correlational research model was applied to investigate the relationship between two variables consistent with the general purpose of the study.

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In the selection of the research group, purposeful sampling approaches and convenience sampling method were used. In this context, the research group consists of 351 weightlifters, 136 women and 215 men participating in Naim Süleymanoglu Adults Individual Turkey Weightlifting Championship organised in Manavgat district of Antalya on January 23-26th, 2020.

The scale form prepared by the aims of the research was applied to the athletes in the sample voluntarily. During the application of the data collection tools, the participants were informed on the purpose of the research. After the measurement tools were given to the students, they were provided with the correct answer of the scale form in the presence of the researcher. Personal Information Form, Leadership in Sports Scale, and Leadership Strength in Sports-Other Scale were used to collect research data.

Within the scope of the research, "Personal Information Form" consists of seven items. This form was used to reach findings concerning some demographic variables of the participants (gender, age, education level, and place of residence, monthly income, maternal education level and father's education status).

The Leadership in Sports Scale (SLS), developed by Chelladurai & Saleh (1980) was applied to evaluate the leadership styles and behaviour patterns perceived by athletes about their trainers. Toros and Tiryaki (2006) carried out Turkish reliability and validity studies of the scale. This five-point Likert type scale consists of 40 items and five sub-dimensions. .80 for "Learning Behavior", .79 for "Democratic Behavior", .41 for "Autocratic Behavior", .75 for "Social Support" and .60 for "Rewarding Behavior" Cronbach's Alpha value was obtained according to the calculated internal consistency coefficients of each sub-dimension (Toros and Tiryaki, 2006).

Wann et al. (2000) transferred the interpersonal power typology of French and Faven (1959) to sports psychology, and two separate scale forms were developed for athletes and trainers. These are Sports Leadership Strength Scale-Self (trainer form-SLSS-S) and Sport Leadership Strength Scale-Other (athlete form-SLSS-O). Konter (2007) performed the adaptation of SLSS-O and SLSS-S to Turkish, and the validity and reliability studies of the scales were revealed four power factors. These are coercive, expert, legitimate and referent powers (Konter, 2007). SLSS-O and SLSS-S are Likert-type scales, and the answer given to each item varies between 1 and 9 (1 represents 'I do not agree at all', 9 means 'I completely agree'). SLSS-O and SLSS-S consist of 11 items. There were three items in each sub-factor and only two items in the "coercive power". A higher score indicates more excellent leadership power perception. In Turkish culture, SLSS-O's Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients are a = .86 in coercive power, a = .89 in expert power, a = .82 in legitimate power and a = .85 in referent power. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of SLSS-S in

Turkish culture are a = .87 in coercive power, a = .88 in expert power, .88 in legitimate power and a = .86 in referent power (Konter, 2007).

Regarding the structure and statistical properties of the data obtained from the research group, t-test, Kruskal-Wallis test, Spearman Rank Difference Correlation Analysis and Pearson Correlation Analysis were applied in the analysis. Besides, the significance level was accepted as 0.05 in the interpretation of the research findings.

Result:

In this part of the research, the analysis findings of the relevant data are given in the form of tables and interpreted.

Table-1: Frequency & percentages of the demographic Variables

Variables	Groups	f	%	Groups	f	%
Gender	Female	136	38.7	Male	215	61.3
Education	Pri.+Second.	29	8.3	High School	232	66.1
	University	90	25.6			
Residence at	Village + Town	31	8.8	City	155	44.2
	Metropolis	165	47.0			
Mothers' Level of Education	Illiterate	21	6.0	Literate	30	8.5
	Primary	101	28.8	Secondary	103	29.3
	High School	86	24.5	University	10	2.8
Father's Level of Education	Illiterate	13	3.7	Literate	29	8.3
	Primary	94	26.8	Secondary	103	29.3
	High School	95	27.1	University	17	4.8
	X ²	ss				
Age	19.128	2.7491				
Monthly Income Status	4010.997	2265.8271				
Total Number of People	351					

Table-1 is self explanatory.

Table-2: Independent Samples t-test Results Regarding Sub-Dimensions of the Scales in Terms of Gender Variable.

Sub-dimensions	Sex	n	Mean	St.Dev.	Sd	t	p
SLS	Learning Behaviour	Fem. 136	3.8722	.81833	349	1.263	.208
	Democratic Behavior	Mal. 215	3.7599	.80686			
		Fem. 136	3.9608	.81003	349	2.098*	.037
	Autocratic Behavior	Male 215	3.7705	.83863			
		Fem. 136	3.4471	.85764	349	1.017	.310
	Social Support Behavior	Male 215	3.3516	.85614			
		Fem. 136	3.7978	.89998	349	.235	.814
	Rewarding Behavior	Male 215	3.7750	.87677			
SLSS-O		Fem. 136	3.8338	.87553	349	.500	.617
		Male 215	3.7870	.84224			
	Coercive Power	Fem. 136	4.6103	2.14104	349	.346	.730
		Male 215	4.5279	2.19370			
	Referent Power	Fem. 136	6.2696	1.92558	349	1.143	.254
		Male 215	6.0217	2.01411			
	Legitimate Power	Fem. 136	6.5123	1.82344	349	1.837	.067
		Male 215	6.1178	2.04024			
	Expert Power	Fem. 136	6.5441	1.88116	349	.558	.577
		Male 215	6.4279	1.91346			

"Democratic Behavior" sub-dimension scores of the leadership characteristics in sports scale (SLS) by gender. This difference is in favour of the female participants. Thus, it is assumed that female athletes perceive the behaviour of the trainer as more democratic

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than male athletes do.

Table-3: Spearman rank differences correlation analysis results between age variable and sub-dimensions of leadership (behaviour) in sports scale (*P<.05)

Variable	Scale	Learning	Democratic	Autocratic	Social Support	Rewarding
Age	r	.059	.072	.038	.060	.019
	p	.272	.180	.478	.265	.720
	n	351	351	351	351	351

No statistically significant relationship was observed between the age variable of the participants and the mean scores of the SLS sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Table-4: Spearman rank differences correlation analysis results between age variable and sub-dimensions of leadership (power) strength scale. (*P<.05)

Variable	Scale	Coercive Power	Referent Power	Legitimate Power	Expert Power
Age	r	.059	.072	.038	.060
	p	.272	.180	.478	.265
	n	351	351	351	351

No statistically significant relationship was observed between the age variable of the participants and the mean scores of the SLSS-O sub-dimensions (Table-4).

Table-5: Kruskal-Wallis test results related to the sub-dimensions of the scales in terms of education status variable..

Groups	n	Mean	Groups	n	Mean
Learning Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=2.491$; $p=.288$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	148.95	High School	232	180.17
University	90	173.98			
Democratic Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=.509$; $p=.775$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	164.09	High School	232	178.02
University	90	174.63			
Autocratic Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=.231$; $p=.891$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	167.79	High School	232	176.22
University	90	178.09			
Social Support Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=2.398$; $p=.302$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	158.40	High School	232	181.81
University	90	166.70			
Rewarding Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=1.841$; $p=.398$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	169.07	High School	232	181.19
University	90	164.86			
Coercive Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=2.419$; $p=.298$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	148.10	High School	232	178.19
University	90	179.35			
Referent Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=1.069$; $p=.586$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	157.41	High School	232	177.43
University	90	178.31			
Legitimate Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=.423$; $p=.809$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	164.66	High School	232	177.60
University	90	175.54			
Expert Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=.359$; $p=.836$)					
Primary + Sec. Sch.	29	185.67	High School	232	176.05
University	90	172.76			

No statistically significant difference was found between the sub-dimension mean scores of the research scales in terms of the educational status variable (Table-5).

Table-6: Kruskal-wallis test results regarding sub-dimensions of

scales in terms of residence variable

Groups	n	Mean	Groups	n	Mean
Learning Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=4.192$; $p=.123$)					
Village + Town	31	140.44	City	155	180.00
Metropolis	165	178.92			
Democratic Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=1.199$; $p=.549$)					
Village + Town	31	166.19	City	155	171.46
Metropolis	165	182.10			
Autocratic Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=5.687$; $p=.058$)					
Village + Town	31	150.37	City	155	167.57
Metropolis	165	188.73			
Social Support Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=3.772$; $p=.152$)					
Village + Town	31	148.87	City	155	171.88
Metropolis	165	184.96			
Rewarding Power Behavior (sd=2; $\chi^2=.111$; $p=.946$)					
Village + Town	31	171.71	City	155	175.12
Metropolis	165	177.63			
Coercive Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=3.339$; $p=.188$)					
Village + Town	31	159.02	City	155	168.66
Metropolis	165	186.08			
Referent Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=.513$; $p=.774$)					
Village + Town	31	163.56	City	155	177.28
Metropolis	165	177.14			
Legitimate Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=6.252$; $p=.044$)					
Village + Town	31	132.69	City	155	181.29
Metropolis	165	179.17			
Expert Power (sd=2; $\chi^2=3.010$; $p=.222$)					
Village + Town	31	158.79	City	155	185.97
Metropolis	165	169.86			

A significant difference was evidenced between city and village + town in favour of participants living in the city. From here, it is assumed that the legitimate power perceptions of the athletes living in the city towards their trainers are higher. No significant difference was observed in other sub-dimensions of the scales (Table-6).

Table-6: Kruskal-wallis test related to the sub-dimensions of the scales in terms of the maternal education status variable

Groups	n	Mean	Groups	n	Mean
Learning Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=8.319$; $p=.140$)					
Illiterate	21	214.05	Literate	30	173.77
Primary School	101	186.49	Secondory Sch.	103	168.98
High School	86	159.17	University	10	214.00
Democratic Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=9.400$; $p=.094$)					
Illiterate	21	212.00	Literate	30	160.55
Primary Sch.	101	192.66	Secondory Sch.	103	170.27
High School	86	157.96	University	10	192.60
Autocratic Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=3.035$; $p=.695$)					
Illiterate	21	188.38	Literate	30	188.83
Primary Sch.	101	167.68	Secondory Sch.	103	172.06
High School	86	185.83	University	10	151.60
Social Support Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=4.567$; $p=.471$)					
Illiterate	21	204.24	Literate	30	171.37
Primary Sch.	101	186.95	Secondory Sch.	103	172.66
High School	86	162.35	University	10	171.80
Rewarding Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=6.445$; $p=.265$)					
Illiterate	21	204.55	Literate	30	178.67
Primary Sch.	101	186.92	Secondory Sch.	103	175.01

SLSS-O	High School	86	155.58	University	10	183.60
	Coercive Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=13.048^*$; $p=.020$)					High Sch.> Secondary Sch
	Illiterate	21	197.48	Literate	30	169.55
	Primary Sch.	101	177.40	Secondary Sch.	103	151.92
	High School	86	202.70	University	10	154.50
	Referent Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=1.525$; $p=.910$)					
	Illiterate	21	170.19	Literate	30	175.18
	Primary Sch.	101	172.16	Secondary Sch.	103	171.20
	High School	86	186.45	University	10	188.90
	Legitimate Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=5.165$; $p=.396$)					
SLSS	Illiterate	21	186.88	Literate	30	155.97
	Primary Sch.	101	169.20	Secondary Sch.	103	170.03
	High School	86	192.36	University	10	202.65
	Expert Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=8.356$; $p=.138$)					
	Illiterate	21	141.33	Literate	30	162.92
	Primary Sch.	101	181.71	Secondary Sch.	103	163.52
	High School	86	196.15	University	10	185.65

A statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the “coercive power” sub-dimension of SLSS-O in terms of the maternal education variable was discovered which was in favour of the participants whose mother’s education status was high school and middle school, and the participants whose mother’s education level was high school. No statistically significant difference was observed in other sub-dimensions of the scales (Table-7).

Table-8: Kruskal-wallis test results related to sub-dimensions of scales in terms of father’s education status variable.

Groups	n	Mean	Groups	n	Mean
Learning Behaviour (sd=5; $\chi^2=8.203$; $p=.145$)					
Illiterate	13	128.31	Literate	29	201.67
Primary Sch.	94	171.89	Secondary Sch.	103	180.54
High School	95	167.06	University	17	213.85
Democratic Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=4.020$; $p=.547$)					
Illiterate	13	133.15	Literate	29	189.36
Primary Sch.	94	180.61	Secondary Sch.	103	176.88
High School	95	169.04	University	17	194.09
Autocratic Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=9.448$; $p=.092$)					
Illiterate	13	134.08	Literate	29	201.43
Primary Sch.	94	171.66	Secondary Sch.	103	171.21
High School	95	190.93	University	17	134.24
Social Support Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=3.846$; $p=.572$)					
Illiterate	13	134.15	Literate	29	196.38
Primary Sch.	94	177.60	Secondary Sch.	103	179.70
High School	95	170.71	University	17	171.59
Rewarding Behavior (sd=5; $\chi^2=9.351$; $p=.096$)					
Illiterate	13	110.23	Literate	29	208.72
Primary Sch.	94	175.08	Secondary Sch.	103	178.89
High School	95	170.04	University	17	191.35
Coercive Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=10.648$; $p=.059$)					
Illiterate	13	171.92	Literate	29	186.26
Primary Sch.	94	165.32	Secondary Sch.	103	163.59
High School	95	202.36	University	17	148.56
Referent Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=1.635$; $p=.897$)					
Illiterate	13	156.77	Literate	29	182.14
Primary Sch.	94	168.38	Secondary Sch.	103	183.23
High School	95	176.54	University	17	175.59
Legitimate Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=6.680$; $p=.246$)					

Illiterate	13	161.62	Literate	29	197.90
Primary Sch.	94	157.42	Secondary Sch.	103	176.60
High School	95	184.00	University	17	204.03
Expert Power (sd=5; $\chi^2=3.824$; $p=.575$)					
Illiterate	13	138.77	Literate	29	172.33
Primary Sch.	94	172.69	Secondary Sch.	103	176.74
High School	95	178.72	University	17	209.38

No statistically significant difference between the subscales (Table-8).

Table-9: Rank differences Correlation Analysis between Monthly Income Variable and sub-dimensions of Sports Leadership Scale.

Variable	Scale	Learning	Democratic	Autocratic	Social Support	Rewarding
Monthly Income	r	-.040	-.096	-.118*	-.077	-.036
	p	.455	.074	.027	.151	.507
	n	351	351	351	351	351

A negative relationship between the monthly income variable of the participants and the mean scores of the “Autocratic Behavior” sub-dimension of SLS (Table-9).

Table-10: Spearman rank differences correlation analysis between Monthly Income Variable and Sub-Dimensions of Leadership Strength in Sports Scale

Variable	Scale	Coercive	Referent	Legitimate	Expert
Monthly Income	r	-.159**	-.067	-.026	-.069
	p	.003	.208	.632	.199
	n	351	351	351	351

A negative relationship between the monthly income variable of the participants and the mean scores of the “coercive power” sub-dimension of SLSS-O (table-10).

Table-10: Results of Pearson correlation analysis between sub-dimensions of leadership in sports & leadership strength in sports

Variable	Scale	Learning	Democratic	Autocratic	Social Support	Rewarding
Coercive	r	.158*	.109*	.260*	.176*	.148**
	p	.003	.041	.000	.001	.005
	n	351	351	351	351	351
Referent	r	.236*	.225*	.185*	.218*	.228*
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	n	351	351	351	351	351
Legitimate	r	.212*	.190*	.237*	.190*	.229**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	n	351	351	351	351	351
Expert	r	.221**	.153*	.115*	.207*	.206*
	p	.000	.004	.032	.000	.000
	n	351	351	351	351	351

Discussion :

As a result of the analysis, the leadership characteristics and leadership strength of weightlifting trainers perceived by the athletes did not show a significant difference in the sub-dimensions of both scales according to the variables of the athletes’ age and educational status. Related results to our findings, Tozkar (2019) did not detect a statistically significant difference between athletic students’ perceptions of leadership power towards their teachers as a leader, and their age, educational status and their

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perceptions of leadership power for their teachers. Furthermore, in football players, no significant difference was observed between the age variable and the leadership behaviours of the trainers in line with the perceptions of the participants (Besiz, 2016). As a result of the analyses evaluating the leadership characteristics and leadership power perceptions of athletes towards their trainers in terms of gender variable, a significant difference was found in favour of female athletes only in the mean scores of the “Democratic Behavior” sub-dimension of the SLS. Konter (2007) reported a significant difference in SLSS-O’s “Power of Expert” sub-dimension scores according to the gender of the athletes. Therefore, female athletes have a higher perception of expert power for their trainers than male athletes. Çetintas (2019) by taking karate trainers as a sample, it was concluded that, contrary to the present findings, the gender variable was not a determining factor on the leadership power perception of the trainer. Thus, Öktem (2015) did not detect a statistically significant difference between perceived leadership behaviours of the trainer according to the gender variable in his study on karate athletes.

In this context, as Reddin (1977) mentioned in the “Three Dimensional Leadership Theory”, the leadership process is thought to be related to the competence of the person and the ability to penetrate the perceptions of the members of the organisation.

When the data on the place of residence variable were examined, it was determined that the athletes residing in the city had higher perceptions of the “legitimate Power” sub-dimension of SLSS-O than the athletes living in the village + town did. It is thought that the more formal, prescriptive and authoritarian structure of city life compared to village life affects the perception of athletes towards their trainers in this direction.

According to the data obtained from our research group, a significant difference was found in the “coercive power” sub-dimension of SLSS-O in the mother education variable. This difference is in favour of the athletes whose mother’s education level is high school and those who have a secondary school, and those whose mother’s education level is high school. Duran (2019) investigated the factors affecting leadership behaviour and perceptions of children at an early age, and as a result, the mother found a significant difference in education status. The family, which is the first structure in which a person’s life takes shape, is essential in the formation of personality and leadership qualities of children in this regard (Arslan & Durmus, 2013). Aslan *et al.* (2017) support our data. The educational level of family members and their relationships with each other, the life offered to the child, the ways to solve the problems and decision-making styles are the factors that affect the children’s approaches and definitions to the concept of leadership. Although all these studies emphasise the

influence of mothers, fathers’ influence cannot be underestimated. In the general family structures in our country, the relationship between the father and the child, combined with the collectivist and hierarchical cultural structure, shapes the identity of the leaders with its reflection on the organisational management (Canbolat *et al.*, 2010). The reason for the differing results and findings of our study is the possibility that mothers take a more active role in the lives of their children in family dynamics in the research groups.

A negative and low-level significant relationship was found between the monthly income variable of the participants and the mean scores of SLS’s “Autocratic Behavior” and SLSS-O’s “Coercive Power”. “Coercive power” is the leader’s use of his power source for intimidation and mobbing. “Autocratic Behavior”, on the other hand, is the mode of behaviour in which all authority and decision-making process is in the lead (Wann *et al.*, 2000). In this context, the perception of trainer behaviour as more authoritarian and coercive as the monthly income level decreases in athletes can be explained by the socio-economic limitations and inadequacies that athletes may feel. Weiss (2002) stated that increasing income level affects people’s perceptions in various ways. Adatepe (2018) emphasised the importance of people’s socio-economic status on their perception levels. These results coincide with our research data, and it is thought that the income earned by the individual can increase motivation and exhibit behaviour that is more pragmatic and attitude.

Although there were many studies on the leadership and leadership characteristics of the coach in sports (Dale & Weinberg, 1989; Dwyer & Fischer, 1990; Brooks *et al.*, 2000; Turman, 2001; Turman & Schrod, 2004; Kim & Cruz, 2016; Turnnidge & Côté, 2019) There is no study covering the leadership characteristics and leadership power of the trainer at the same time. In this study, which was carried out to fill this gap in the literature, the relationship between the leadership characteristics of weightlifting trainers and their leadership strength was evaluated from the perspective of athletes. As a result of the research, according to the perceptions of the athletes, there was a low level of a positive correlation between leadership in sports and leadership power in sports scales. Thus, it can be assumed that effective and robust leadership characteristics are at the basis of a strong leadership perception. In this sense, it can be concluded that the ability of trainers to exhibit behaviour under the related situation such as educational and instructive behaviour, democratic behaviour, autocratic behaviour, social support behaviour, rewarding behaviour, which are among the effective leadership characteristics, will play a supportive role in being recognized as a strong leader.

As a consequence, new data has been collected that will add scientific results to the literature. However, the study

results provide a small number of participant data, taking into account constraints on sampling access. For this purpose, it is possible to perform similar research in which the study is extended to include all categories of age and gender, exploring the same relationship with a broad data collection. Moreover, through conducting qualitative and mixed studies, research findings may be diversified.

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