PREFERRED COACHING LEADERSHIP AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE INFLUENCES AMONG YOUNG ATHLETES

Noor Hamzani Farizan[1*], Mohamad Amirul Zaini[2], Borhannudin Abdullah[2] and Shamsulariffin Samsudin[2],

[1]*Defence Fitness Academy, National Defence University of Malaysia, Sungai Besi Camp, 57000, Kuala Lumpur*

[2]*Department of Sports Studies, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM, Serdang, Selangor.*

[*]*Corresponding authors: noorhamzani@upnm.edu.my*

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: It is beneficial to have a comfortable coach-athlete connection if the coach is able to embrace the leadership style that is preferred by athletes. **AIMS:** Developing the ideal coach-athlete relationship requires incorporating emotional intelligence (EQ), individual focus, and coach dedication in order to improve interpersonal connections, the functioning of the team, and performance outcomes. **METHODS:** The study soughed 144 young student-athletes' preferred leadership style by multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 6s (MLQ-F6) and used a 41-item of modified Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence test (SSEIT) to examine the individual Emotional Intelligence. **RESULTS:** A result showed the overall mean for the level of EQ among young student-athletes is only 3.27, which can be interpreted as an average state. The findings also indicated a positive association was found that the participants with moderate EI tended to prefer transformational leadership styles. **CONCLUSION:** This research has influenced the direction of leadership in sports and revealed a realistic recommendation for the ideal transformational leadership style for coaching behavior and suggestions of optimal coaching behaviors for sports leadership, especially for young athletes.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, leadership style, coaching leadership, young athletes

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI), sometimes referred to as emotional quotient (EQ), is a term that refers to the ability to recognize, comprehend, manage, and utilize one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Goleman, 2001). EI and EQ are sometimes used interchangeably. It requires a set of abilities and competencies essential to one's personal and professional success, as well as the maintenance of healthy relationships with other people. Moreover, Emotional intelligence (EI) is also a term used to describe a personal soft skill that integrates emotion and cognition. It includes a variety of psychological competencies, including the capacity to observe, recognize, comprehend, and regulate an individual's feelings and those of others. As Bar-On (1997) defined emotional intelligence as a range of noncognitive such as emotional and social capabilities, competencies, and skills influencing one's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressure. It was believed that these elements may forecast a person's psychological growth. The five domains in Bar-On's emotional intelligence model are intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general mood (Bar-On, 1997). Developing a person's emotional intelligence can have a substantial impact on many facets of life in general, including being able to communicate more effectively, the level of leadership, the quality of interpersonal connections, and overall sense of well-being. It's an ability and skill that can be built up and improved throughout all aspects of a person's life by practicing, developing self-awareness, and reflecting on life's events (Goleman, 2001).

In addition to being essential to a leader's interpersonal effects, negotiation, and conflict-resolution abilities, EI competency has been used to assess an organization's efficacy in management, applied psychology, anthropology, economics, sociology, political science, and sports (Gardner et al., 2020; Schneider, 2013). Research has shown that intellectual stimulation can predict leaders' behaviours that lead to a higher level of transformation (Barling et al., 2000). Building strong coach-athlete relationships and fostering a positive, safe sports environment mostly depends on mutual understanding of nonverbal cues, such as emotions and moods. Sports leadership disciplines have traditionally placed a strong emphasis on conventional tactics, such as teaching from a leader-centered perspective and prioritizing team commitment (Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996). According to the updated EI model, recognizing cultural variations in evaluating emotions was a new subcomponent introduced to understanding emotions, which may have hindered efforts to repair the relationships (Mayers et al., 2016). Thus, an in-depth understanding of how the cognitive process works and how interpersonal behaviors are viewed has the advantage of increasing motivation in interactions and connections between coaches and athletes across cultural boundaries (Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2011).

Research conducted in recent years has demonstrated an increasing interest in emotional intelligence (EI) and its relationship to sports (Laborde et al., 2016; Ubago-Jimenez et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence has emerged as a topic of widespread interest, particularly in

sports psychology and leadership. In sports, Lobore et al. (2013) defined emotion as an organized, psychological reaction that evaluates an ongoing contextual interaction. Previous studies also noted that winning and losing, surpassing one's abilities via performance, and recovering from an injury all give conception to different emotions (Magrum et al., 2019; Rodriguez-Romo et al., 2021). Research has shown that emotions play a significant role in competitions and can have a considerable impact on athletes' results. Therefore, EI has the potential to serve as a predictor of athletic performance (Kopp and Jekauc., 2018; Rodriguez-Romo et al.,2021). Therefore, given the increasing interest in emotional intelligence (EI) and its relevance to sports, this may be a chance for Sarawak Sports Development to investigate and determine the type of coach that can be retained to teach the development team in order to accomplish the nation's 'Sports Powerhouse' by 2024. As a result, this study is particularly significant since it will shed light on the positive relationships between coaches and athletes in Sarawak and the emotional intelligence skills possessed by those athletes in various regions.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in the Sports Sarawak Development Program represent the population for the aim of this study. According to the Sports Development Division, the state of Sarawak is separated into three different zones: the Southern Zone, which includes the cities of Kuching, Kota Samarahan, Serian, and Sri Aman; the Central Zone, which provides for Betong, Sarikei, Sibu, and Kapit; and the Northern Zone, which includes Bintulu, Miri, and Limbang. Individual, Targeted, Wall and Net, Invasion, and Combat Sports are the five (5) sports categories that Sarawak has established for the various sports. To meet the inclusion criteria, each athlete needed to be at least 12 years old and should have prior experience working with at least one head coach. The researcher recruited only current Sarawak athletes, whereas athletes in club sports were excluded from the study.

Instrumentation and measurement

The self-administered questionnaire for this study is available as an online Google Form, where the data gathered will be recorded and protected. Three elements comprised the online survey: background information about the participants, a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire for 6S, and a modified version of the Schutte Self-reported Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The purpose of these questionnaires was to evaluate Sarawakian players' emotional intelligence abilities and preferred coaching and leadership styles. The district, zone, sport, age, and gender were the independent factors. The individuals' preferred leadership styles and self-reported EI scores were the dependent variables. In this study, emotional intelligence in the general population has been measured using the modified Schuttle Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) (Austein et al., 2014; Schutte et al., 1998).

The modified SSEIT employs a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 and describing "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neutral," "agree," and "strongly agree." In the present study,

the 41-item modified version of Austrin's (2004) SSEIT was used, which corresponds to the three categories of Solovey and Mayer's (1990) emotional intelligence model: (a) optimism/mood regulation, (b) utilization of emotions, and (c) appraisal of emotions (Bester et al., 2013). In addition, the 41-item SSEIT contains a greater proportion of 21 items with reversed values than the previous 33-item version, which contained only three questions with reversed values. It is possible that the original text does not accurately reflect the opinions of individuals in the real world. The modified version is regarded as a balanced scale for objective assessment of emotional intelligence components (Saklofske et al., 2007). The internal consistency of the 41-item SSEIT was likewise determined to be comparable to the original version. Ng et al. (2010) recommended the use of the 41-item SSEIT for international students in the United States due to its greater concurrent validity and reliability.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 6s (MLQ-6S) assesses the preferences of student-athletes for transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. The MLQ-6S consists of 21 items that indicate four forms of transformational leadership, two styles of transactional leadership, and one style of laissez-faire leadership (3 items per factor). Transformational leadership, according to Bass Avolio (1990), entails idealize influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Transactional leadership is associated with contingent reward and management by exception. A passive leadership style is classified with laissez-faire administration. This survey provides descriptions of seven leadership styles. Each question is measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from not at all (0 points), once in while (1 point), sometimes (2 points), fairly often (3 points), to frequently/ always (4 points). The total score on the MLQ-6S is subdivided into three ranges: high (9-12), moderate (5-8), and low (0-4). These instruments can be used to compare the evolution of the ideal leadership style in Sarawak with the results of the emotional intelligence in terms of the preferred leadership style in various regions of Sarawak.

Procedure

The formal approval from the participants was obtained prior to data collection. A formal request letter and consent form was delivered. Following this, the researcher disperses the self-administrated questionnaire (via Google form) to respondents for each Sports Development Division.

Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire was filled in by the respondents emphasizing their voluntary participation and ensuring the confidentiality of their responses. This also ensures the study compliance with ethical standards and guidelines.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic of respondents

The demographic profile of the Sarawak development athlete was analysed to visualize the composition of the respondents (Table 1). One hundred and forty-four (N=144) respondents completed the survey with an 56.9% (n=82) response rate from Southern Zone, 23.6% (n=34) from Northern Zone and 19.4% (n=28) participants from Central Zone.

Table 1. Demographic of Respondent

Demographic background	Frequency (n)	Percentage(%)
Gender		
Male	85	59
Female	59	41
Age		
13 – 16-year-old	89	61.8
17 – 20-year-old	55	38.2
Type Of Sports		
Individual	40	27.8
Invasion	6	4.2
Wall & Net	18	12.5
Combat	51	35.4
Target	29	20.1
District Zone		
Southern Zone	82	56.9
Northern Zone	34	23.6
Central Zone	28	19.4

The level of emotional intelligence

The level of emotional intelligence of Sarawak Sports Development Athletes (N=144) responses of Modified Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligences Test (MSSEIT) shown in Table 2. Four factors represented the EI level with optimism/ mood regulation has the highest mean score (mean = 3.69, SD= ±0.47), and appraisal of emotions scored the lowest with mean of 2.96, SD= ±0.47. The study reveals an average Emotional Intelligence Score (M = 3.27, SD = ±0.37), meaning that Sarawak development athlete emotional intelligence is in moderate state, probably due to the emotional understanding have not fully develop. This is based on the mean values as references (Landell, 1997), which was classified into three (3) levels namely low (mean score 1.00 – 2.99), moderate (mean score 3.00 – 3.99), and high (mean score 4.00 – 5.00).

Table 2. Emotional Intelligence Factor

Factor	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Optimism/ Mood Regulation	144	3.69	0.47
Utilization of Emotions	144	3.16	0.49
Appraisal of Emotion	144	2.96	0.46
Emotional Intelligence Score	144	3.27	0.37

Emotional Intelligence based on gender.

As a comparison by gender, the EI level differences among males and females of Sarawak Sports Development Athletes are shown in Table 3. Based on the findings, there is no significant difference between genders established for each factor and overall, of EI as $p>.05$.

Table 3. Emotional Intelligences T-test for Equality of Means by Gender

Factor	Significant (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference
Optimism/ mood regulation	0.489	-0.05	0.79
Utilization of emotions	0.957	-0.01	0.84
Appraisal of emotion	0.120	0.12	0.78
Total Score EI	0.739	0.02	0.06

Emotional Intelligence based on type of sports.

There are four different types of sports in the program of Sarawak Sports Development Athletes, which are categorized as Individual, Invasion, Wall & Net and Combat. According to Table 4, the results show that the overall score of EI indicated a significant difference based on the types of sports. Only one factor, utilization of emotions, showed significant differences between the types of sports, with a mean score of 0.71, $p=0.02$. This may be because Sarawak development athletes still need to develop their emotional understanding, and according to Austin et al. (2022), individuals who score high on utilization of emotions reported having difficulty in controlling the emotions.

Table 4. Emotional Intelligence ANOVA Test by Type of Sports

Factor	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Optimism/ mood regulation	1.12	4	0.28	1.28	0.28
Utilization of emotions	2.84	4	0.71	3.00	0.02*
Appraisal of emotion	0.90	4	0.22	1.05	0.38
Total Score EI	1.47	4	0.36	2.83	0.02*

*$p<.05$

The leadership style.

The leadership style preferred by Sarawak Sports Development Athletes is represented by responses to Multiple Leadership Questionnaire Form 6s (MLQ-F6) shown in Figure 1. The highest percentage (24%) appeared to be an idealized influence among overall participants. Seven factors represent the types of leadership. Transformational leadership entails idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Transactional leadership is associated with contingent reward and management by exception. A passive leadership style is classified as laissez-faire administration. The results showed that the leadership style preferred by Sarawak Sports Development Athletes is transformational leadership. On the other hand, the least preferred leadership style is laissez-faire.

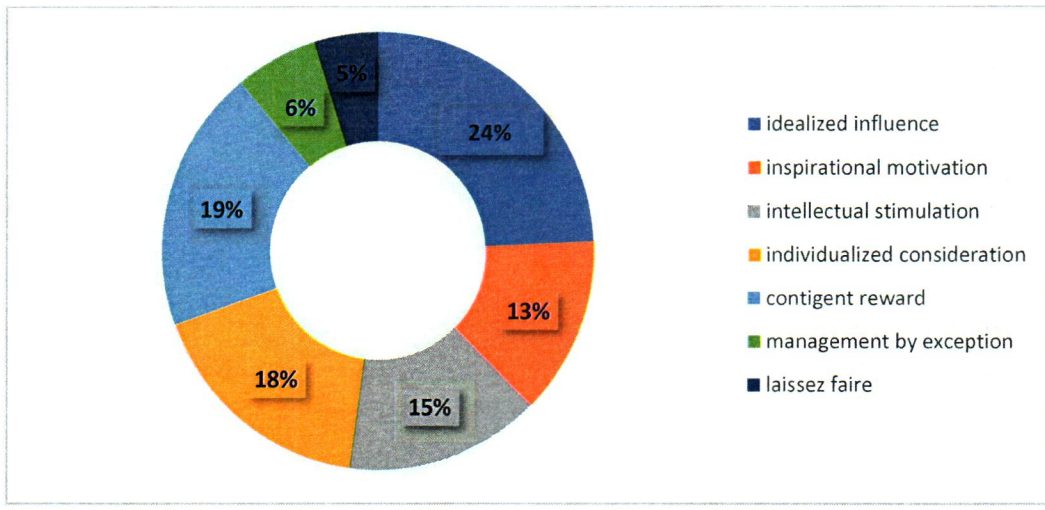

Figure 1. Participants' Preferences for Leadership Styles

Transformational Leadership by gender and types of sports.

The results show that there is no significant difference between males and females and also types of sports among Sarawak Sports Development Athletes on the preferred leadership style.

Emotional Intelligence scores influence toward transformational leadership style.

The findings in this study indicated only 0.18 (18%) of emotional intelligence scores influence the type of transformational leadership style preferred by Sarawak Sports Development Athletes as in Table 5. In addition, factor 1 (Optimism/ mood regulation) have a high percentage of influence toward the transformational leadership style, with value of 0.39 (39%), follow by factor 2 (Utilization of emotion), with value of 0.10 (10%) and factor 3 (Appraisal of emotion) with the value of 0.08 (8%) as shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Regression Table of EI Score influence toward Transformational Leadership Style

Model	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	0.18	10.32	3	140	<.001	1.74

Table 6. Coefficients table of EI Score influence toward Transformational Leadership Style

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Factor 1	0.390	4.616	<0.001
Factor 2	0.106	1.074	0.285
Factor 3	-0.089	-0.977	0.330

DISCUSSION AND DISCUSSION

Previous study indicates that coaching based on the concept of transformational leadership may fulfil the psychological demands of the athlete and motivate the athlete's supporters to achieve outstanding performance (Jo-Hsuan Lee et al., 2022; Schneider, 2013). In addition, emotional intelligence has been used to predict the capability to lead through transformational coaching behaviour (Jo-Hsuan Lee et al., 2022). The purpose of this study is to investigate the growth of emotional intelligence among athletes participating in Sarawak's development programme and to compare the transformational leadership styles that these athletes prefer. On top of that, the focus of this study was on the influence that an individual's level of emotional intelligence has on their preference for a transformational leadership style. According to the findings of this study, the emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership (TL) of Sarawak development athletes are at a moderate level. On the other hand, research by Gabriel Rodriguez et al. (2021) suggests a correlation between experience, measured by quantity (number of years practising sports) and quality (competition level). Based on the research of Fernandez et al. (2005) and Laborde et al. (2011), experiences and athletic skills may be associated with improved emotional adjustment. Furthermore, it is understandable that the results of the emotional intelligence and transformational leadership tests have no significance in gender and sports categories. This is because the research conducted by Gabriel Rodriguez et al., 2021 suggested that the quantity and quality of experiences should be measured, and emotional intelligence can be acquired through participation in sports. A study by Jo-Hsuan Lee et al., 2022 demonstrated a slight correlation between the two variables, with higher EI athletes indicating a stronger preference for transformational leadership. The study concerned the relationship between emotional intelligence score and preferred transformational leadership style. Despite this, Jo-Hsuan Lee and colleagues 2022 believed that the accumulation of life experiences played a role in forming transformative leadership to promote the sharing of perspectives. In the case of Sarawak's development athletes, emotional intelligence doesn't make much of a difference in transformational leadership style.

REFERENCES

Austin, E. J., Saklofske, D. H., Huang, S. H., & McKenney, D. (2004). Measurement of trait emotional intelligence: Testing and cross-validating a modified version of Schutte et al.'s (1998) measure. *Personality and Individual Differences, 36*(3), 555-562. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00114-4

Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (1995). Individual consideration viewed at multiple levels of analysis: A multi-level framework for examining the diffusion of transformational leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 6*(2), 199-218.

Bar-On, R. (1997). *Emotional Quotient Inventory: Technical manual.* Multi-Health Systems.

Bar-On, R. (2010). Emotional intelligence: An integral part of positive psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology, 40*(1), 54-62.

Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations.* Free Press.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). *Transformational leadership development: Manual for the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*. Palo Alto Consulting Psychologists Press.

Barling, J., Slater, F., & Kelloway, E. K. (2000). Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence: An exploratory study. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal, 21*(3), 157-161. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730010325040

Bester, M., Jonker, C. S., & Nel, J. A. (2013). Confirming the factor structure of the 41-item version of the Schutte emotional intelligence scale. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 23*(2), 213-221. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2013.10820617

Bono, J. E., & Judge, T. A. (2004). Personality and transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*(5), 901-910. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.89.5.901

Chan, J. T., & Mallett, C. J. (2011). The value of emotional intelligence for high performance coaching. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 6*(3), 315-328. https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.6.3.315

Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, S. D. (1980). Dimensions of leader behavior in sports: Development of a leadership scale. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 2*(1), 34-

Chelladurai, P. (2014). *Managing organizations for sport and physical activity* (4th Edition). Holcomb Hathaway Publishers.

Charbonneau, D., Barling, J., & Kelloway, E. K. (2001). Transformational leadership and sports performance: The mediating role of intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 31*(7), 1521-1534. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2001.tb02686.x

Cotterill, S. T., & Fransen, K. (2016). Athlete leadership in sport teams: Current understanding and future directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 9*(1), 116-133. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2015.1124443

Emmerling, R., Emmerling, R. J., & Boyatzis, R. E. (2012). Emotional and social intelligence competencies: Cross cultural implications. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, *19*(1), 4–18. https://doi.org/10.1108/13527601211195592

Gardner, W. L., Lowe, K. B., Meuser, J. D., Noghani, F., Gullifor, D. P., & Cogliser, C. C. (2020). The leadership trilogy: A review of the third decade of leadership quarterly. *The Leadership Quarterly, 31*(1), 101379. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101379

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ.* Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (2000). Leadership that gets results. *Harvard business review, 78*(2), 4-17.

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. E., & McKee, A. (2013). *Primal leadership: Unleashing the power of emotional intelligence.* Harvard Business Press.

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. E., McKee, A., & Finkelstein, S. (2015). *HBR's 10 must reads on emotional intelligence.* Harvard Business Review Press.
Jo-Hsuan Lee, Richard Hsiao, Wei-Chin Tseng, Kristi Storti, Kuo-Wei Tseng, & Robert Alman. (2022). A Cross Cultural Study of Emotional Intelligence and Preferred Coaching Leadership in Collegiate Student-Athletes. *International Journal of Business in Sports, Tourism & Hospitality Management*, *3*(No.1), 57–80.

Kopp, A., & Jekauc, D. (2018). The influence of emotional intelligence on performance in competitive sports: A meta-analytical investigation. In *Sports* (Vol. 6, Issue 4). MDPI. https://doi.org/10.3390/sports6040175

Laborde, S., Dosseville, F., & Allen, M. S. (2016). Emotional intelligence in sport and exercise: A systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports, 26*(8), 862-874. https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.12510

Lee, Y. H. (2019). Emotional intelligence, servant leadership, and development goal orientation in athletic directors. *Sport Management Review*, *22*(3), 395–406. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.05.003

Lopez-Zafra, E., Garcia-Retamero, R., & Martos, M. P. B. (2012). The relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence from a gendered approach. *The Psychological Record, 62*(1), 97-114. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03395790

Mathew, M., & Gupta, K. S. (2015). Transformational leadership: Emotional intelligence. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management, 12*(2), 75-89.

Ng, K. M., Wang, C., Kim, D. H., & Bodenhorn, N. (2010). Factor structure analysis of the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale on international students. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 70*(4), 695-709. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164409355691

Pooja, P., & Kumar, P. (2016). Demographic variables and its effect on emotional intelligence: A study on 11ndian service sector employees. *Annals of Neurosciences*, *23*(1), 18–24. https://doi.org/10.1159/000443552

Rodriguez-Romo, G., Blanco-Garcia, C., Diez-Vega, I., & Acebes-Sánchez, J. (2021). Emotional Intelligence of Undergraduate Athletes: The Role of Sports Experience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.609154

Rubio, I. M., Ángel, N. G., Esteban, M. D. P., & Ruiz, N. F. O. (2022). Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Motivation, Anxiety and Leadership in Athletes. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(12). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19127521

Saklofske, D. H., Austin, E. J., Rohr, B. A., & Andrews, J. J. (2007). Personality, emotional intelligence and exercise. *Journal of Health Psychology, 12*(6), 937-948. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105307082458

Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, 9*(3), 185-211. https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG

Schneider, R. C. (2013). Emotional intelligence: the overlooked component of sport leadership. *International Journal of Sport and Society, 3*(3), 43-56. https://doi.org/10.18848/2152-7857/cgp/v03i03/53920

Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Golden, C. J., & Dornheim, L. (1998). Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences, 25*, 167–177. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(98)00001-4

Shapie, M. N. M., Zenal, Z., Parnabas, V., & Abdullah, N. M. (2016). The correlation between leadership coaching style and satisfaction among University Silat Olahraga athletes. *Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology, 3*(16), 34-39. https://doi.org/10.14589/ido.16.3.4

Sosik, J. J., & Megerian, L. E. (1999). Understanding a leader's emotional intelligence and performance: The role of self-other agreement on transformational leadership perceptions. *Group and Organization Management,24*(3),367-39 =https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601199243006