

Athlete Leadership and Team Performance: Moderating Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Mediating Role of Team Cohesion and Work Passion

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Received: 30th August 2021

Revised: 16th October 2021

Accepted: 21st October 2021

Abstract: This research examines the association between athlete leadership, team cohesion, work passion, organizational citizenship behavior, and team performance in a sports setting. Besides, this study examines the moderating role of organizational citizenship behavior in the relation of athlete leadership with team cohesion and team performance. It also demonstrates the mediating role of team cohesion and work passion. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 200 athlete members of UAE sports organizations and analyzed using structural equation modeling to test the hypotheses. The findings demonstrate that athlete leadership positively influences team cohesion and team performance. Besides, the study found that while athlete leadership has no direct influence on team cohesion, it positively influences team cohesion when organizational citizenship behavior functions as a moderator. This study underlines the need for acknowledging the significance and impact of athlete leadership, cohesiveness, work passion, and organizational citizenship behavior on team performance. This study contributes to the sports

literature and can guide sports authorities for improving team performance in an emerging country context.

Keywords: Athlete leadership; Team cohesion; Work passion; Organizational citizenship behavior; Team performance; Sports; United Arab Emirates.

1. Introduction

The sports industry is becoming vastly popular due to a worldwide shift toward increasing numbers of sports events (Ullah et al., 2021). Lately, there has been a continuous appreciation of leadership's role at all sports organizations (O'Boyle et al., 2015; Peachey et al., 2015). Loughhead et al. (2006) described athlete leadership as an activity of one or more players in a team guiding their teammates to reach common objectives. Further, Moran and Weiss (2006) added that team leaders are responsible for developing team goals and organizing and directing team members to fulfill these missions. Athlete leaders are generally classified as formal and informal. Formal athlete leaders or team captains are officially appointed through team selection or by coaching staff.

On the contrary, informal athlete leaders evolve gradually but unofficially through interacting with team members. Consequently, all team members can offer leadership regardless of the sports organization's structure and the number of captains (Loughhead and Hardy, 2005). In any case, researchers classify athlete leaders' behaviors by primary roles, namely, task, social, external (Loughhead et al., 2006), and motivational leadership (Fransen et al., 2014).

Even a highly trained set of sports people fail to consistently win a sports game except if they function as a team. It is essential to mention that effectual leadership is identified as a significant factor (Cotterill, 2013). Although research in sports mainly concentrated on coach leadership (Chelladurai, 2007), prior studies have also demonstrated the role of accomplished athlete leaders in teams' enhanced performance (Price and Weiss, 2013). Analysts have highlighted athlete leaders' attributes, behaviors, functions, and arrangement in groups (Cotterill and Fransen, 2016; Loughhead, 2017). Besides, constructive relationships have been exhibited connecting athlete leadership and numerous measures of high performing team namely, player satisfaction (Eys et al., 2006), team resilience (Morgan et al., 2013), task and social cohesion (Loughhead et al., 2016), collective efficacy and team identification (Fransen et al., 2014). Although some studies were conducted on athlete leadership in the past decade, it remains an unexplored topic. Very little has been revealed about athlete leadership's role on team performance and many high team performance indicators such as team cohesion, work passion, and organizational citizenship behavior. The present study seeks to address this research gap and explores athlete leadership's influence on team cohesion, work passion, organizational citizenship behavior, and team performance.

Cohesion is among the most crucial small group variables (Lott and Lott, 1965; Spink, 2016). Originally, cohesion was reported as consistency in behaviour and thinking

(Festinger, 1950). Later, it was expressed as the pressure which retains members in a group (Festinger et al., 1963). Nonetheless, these interpretations portrayed cohesion as a unidimensional concept where individuals were inclined towards their group and limited its purview. Later Carron et al. (1985) propounded that cohesion was a multifaceted phenomenon. In 1988, this group of researchers explained team cohesion as an active exercise exhibited when it is likely for a group to endure integrity for obtaining its key purposes and satisfying the affective needs of members. While acknowledging the explanation, Carron et al. (2002) illustrated that greater cohesion levels are linked to higher team performance.

A study found a cohesion-performance relationship in sport (Carron et al., 2002). Cohesion involves task and social elements. Task cohesion depicts members' interest concerning the critical targets of groups, including how they are unified about task-related activities. Instead, social cohesion illustrates team members' attentiveness concerning social movements and level of team consolidation (Carron et al., 1998). In management surroundings, meta-analytic reviews confirm a constructive relationship between team cohesion and teamwork (LePine et al., 2008) and team cohesion and performance (Beal et al., 2003). Investigations in athletics setting have shown functional relationships between team cohesion and specific teamwork behaviors, in particular, team goal setting (Senecal et al., 2007), intra-team communication (Holt and Sparks, 2001), cooperation (Prapavessis and Carron, 1997), and constructive conflict management (Sullivan and Feltz, 2001). Carron et al. (2002) depicted a strong connection between task cohesion and team success. Earlier research on a sports team has also illustrated the relationship between cohesion and leadership (Caperchione et al., 2011; Hardy et al., 2008). Spink et al. (2005) declared that higher perceptions of cohesion are linked to higher satisfaction and athletes' leadership behaviors. Even though surveys have been conducted on team cohesion in organizational surroundings, there is a preliminary review of athlete leaders' association, team cohesion, and team performance. Scholars have assessed passion for more than three centuries (Swanson and Kent, 2017) and identified it as an engaging psychological construct (Gielnik et al., 2015) and a fundamental energy source for attaining goals. It is also commonly viewed as an essential component for noteworthy output (Vallerand, 2010; Vallerand et al., 2008). While multiple definitions of passion have been proposed, two views are recognized (Vallerand, 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand and Houliort, 2003). The first view was proposed by Descartes (1596-1650). It explains passion as a powerful emotion that is produced when purpose provides a base for conduct (Vallerand et al., 2003). The other view, espoused by Spinoza (1632-1677), is in league with the origin of passion. Since it is related to loss of reason and control, it draws a negative aspect of the idea (Vallerand, 2010). These two approaches are apparent in a sports environment.

A dualistic model of passion has been established towards work (Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand and Houliort, 2003), integrating two well-defined categories: harmonious and obsessive. Harmonious passion is "a strong desire to engage" and consequence of self-determining incorporation when people embrace the under taking readily as necessary

(Marsh et al., 2013, p. 797). Lately, harmonious passion has been related to dominant results such as engagement, commitment, and a notion of control (Forest et al., 2011; Trepanier et al., 2014). The literature also illustrates its positive association with psychological well-being (Forest et al., 2011), self-esteem (Vallerand et al., 2008), work engagement (Trepanier et al., 2014), flexible results, and hopeful emotions (Vallerand et al., 2003). Besides, harmonious passion is negatively linked with burnout (Trepanier et al., 2014; Vallerand, 2010), shame (Vallerand et al., 2003), psychological distress (Forest et al., 2011), and intentions to quit (Burke et al., 2015). In contrast, obsessive passion is explained as a “strong and uncontrollable urge to partake in the activity” (Belanger et al., 2012, p. 2). It is the consequence of controlled internalization, where persuasion is based on the perception of related contingencies (Vallerand et al., 2010). Earlier studies have illustrated its functional relationship with unappealing constructs such as burnout (Trepanier et al., 2014), difference between job and individual pursuits (Vallerand et al., 2010), and obstructive emotions (Vallerand et al., 2003). Furthermore, researchers have informed that obsessive passion has a non-significant relationship with positive constructs such as self-esteem (Vallerand et al., 2008), job performance (Burke et al., 2015), and positive emotions (Vallerand et al., 2003). Researchers also revealed a negative relationship between obsessive passion and adaptive results like psychological well-being and subjective vitality (Forest et al., 2011, Gullu et al., 2020).

Another construct that has received substantial consideration and can contribute to group dynamics in a sports team is organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988). Based upon the idea put forward by Katz and Kahn (1966), it is described as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal rewards system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). To refine this construct, he proposed that five characteristics actualize organizational citizenship behavior: conscientiousness, helping, courtesy, sportsmanship, and civic virtue. In 1990, the analyst widened this model and incorporated more elements like cheerleading and peacekeeping. Later, Podsakoff et al. (1997) employed a scale that these diverse factors were unsheathed in three dimensions, namely, helping behavior (helping with or avoiding unfavorable incidences), civic virtue (responsible participation and interest in the organization), and sportsmanship (enduring issues with no complaints).

Researchers have identified different tools by which organizational citizenship behavior might influence organizational performance. OCB is competent to raise co-worker or managerial capacity (MacKenzie et al. 1991, 1993; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1994; Al Hosani et al., 2020). Once managers or senior staff guide, fresh co-workers learn faster and benefit the whole group. The same idea also applies in sports organizations. More experienced athletes may assist new players in recognizing their roles. OCB also upgrades organizational performance by minimizing the need for maintenance functions (Organ, 1988; Organ et al., 2006). Helping behaviors such as cheerleading (encouraging group members) and peacekeeping (peacemaker acts when other group members face disputes) usually build team spirit, morale, and cohesiveness.

Researchers admit that, independently, these behaviors are inconsequential but inclusively hold the ability to enhance organizational performance.

To our knowledge, studies examining athlete leadership and its influence on the targeted employees in the light of social exchange theory have not been carried out in sports organizations. Since a cohesive work environment may stimulate trust, social exchange is likely reciprocal (Cohen et al., 2012). As described by Blau (1964), social interactions demand unstated responsibility. Over a period, employees feel compelled to respond to the organization if they understand their relationship with it as advantageous. Such reciprocity could be in the condition of raised levels of OCB or performance (Cohen, 2003). Drawing upon this theory, the present research offers an advanced perspective that enhances our understanding of how athlete leadership is associated with team performance in sports surroundings. This research examines the moderating role of organizational citizenship behavior, thus providing insights into intensifying athlete leadership's positive effects. The present study contributes to the literature on athlete leadership, team cohesion, work passion, organizational citizenship behavior, and team performance in different respects. First, it helps understand the association between athlete leadership, team cohesion, work passion, organizational citizenship behavior, and team performance in a sports setting. Second, the study investigates the moderating role of organizational citizenship behavior in the relation of athlete leadership with team cohesion and team performance.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Athlete leadership and team cohesion

Many researchers identify the role and influence of a leader on a team in a sports setting. Loughhead (2016) argued that athlete leaders positively impact team cohesion, identification, confidence, satisfaction, and motivation. Loughhead et al. (2010) portrayed a positive and significant relationship between the role of leader in developing cohesion among team players by using Social Network Analysis. Cotterill and Fransen (2016) also found a positive effect of athlete leadership on team cohesion and performance and suggested that athlete leadership enhances unity and understanding among the players.

Although prior findings depict a valuable association between leadership and team cohesion (Gardner et al., 1996; Carron, 1982; Westre and Weiss, 1991), it is necessary to review further. Contrary to these results, Aoyagi et al. (2008) reported a negative relationship between leadership and cohesion. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis as the literature presents evidence that athlete leadership brings unity and understanding among players.

H1: Athlete leadership positively influences team cohesion.

Team cohesion and team performance

One of the most significant elements in functional team performance is cohesiveness. However, there is minimal research on team cohesion and its effect on team performance in sports environments (Bravo et al., 2019). According to McLaren and Spink (2018), intrateam communication plays an active part in developing sports team cohesion, positively influencing team players' performance. The authors highlighted that cohesion influences team performance in sports teams as effective communication leads to a better understanding of team objectives and strategies.

Glenn and Horn (1993) proposed that teams entail very few athletes to persuade and manage teammates. Researchers have indicated that athlete leaders involved in planned activities influence team's cohesiveness emphatically (Dupuis et al., 2006). However, researchers fail to identify behaviors of athlete leaders that manipulate understanding of team cohesion. Hence, we hypothesize the following:

H2: Team cohesion (cohesive teams) influences team performance.

Athlete leadership and team performance

Constructive leadership in sports strongly affects a single team player and the entire team's performance (Fletcher and Streeter, 2016). Athletic leaders ensure a supportive environment that gives the team players direction to perform well (Fransen et al., 2017; Tavares et al., 2017). Fransen et al. (2017) reported that athletic leaders who were focused on employees' tasks and motivation were more efficient in elevating team performance. Another study demonstrated a direct link between the commitment of athlete leaders and team players' performance (Davis et al., 2018). Hence, the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H3: Athlete leadership positively influences team performance.

Athlete leadership, work passion, and team performance

Passion in sports leads to athletes' positive attitude towards their team and performance (Lafrenière et al., 2011). Güllü (2018) studied the impression of coach and athlete relationship on enhancing team players' passion for sports. The findings depicted the positive influence of the relationship between coach and player on the player's work passion. As athlete leaders ensure motivation and passion among each team player, reflected as athlete leadership, they may raise performance among athletes (Vella et al., 2013).

At the personal level, passion emerges in lower levels of job burnout (Vallerand et al., 2010), healthier interpersonal relations (Philippe et al., 2010), and satisfaction (Thorgren et al., 2013; Vallerand et al., 2010). Also, a passionate workforce leads to enhanced employee creativity and effectiveness (Perttula and Cardon, 2011) and greater

performance through exhausting circumstances (Patel et al., 2015). Authors (Swanson and Kent, 2017; Sverdlik et al., 2019) examined the role of passion in enhancing the performance of athletes and noted a strong correlation between these two constructs, especially during the last moments of the game when performance expectations are high. Similar research by Verner-Filion (2017) highlighted that sports passion gives rise to the need for excelling. These studies present evidence that players' performance is improved based on their desire and passion for winning. Thus, the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H4: Athlete leadership influences work passion.

H5: Passion influences team performance.

OCB as a moderator

Megheirkouni (2017) identified positive consequences of athlete leadership on team dynamics and satisfaction. Effective athlete leadership positively influences team players' confidence level, which is demonstrated in team resilience and team functioning (Loughead, 2016). Leadership has been linked to cohesion (Carron, 1982) and OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Jia & Hu (2018) researched soccer team players and found out that the team players who developed OCB tend to have a positive relationship with their coaches, resulting in team cohesion and enhanced team performance. Hence, it is evident that OCB is created through the positive connection between athlete leadership and team cohesion, ultimately influencing the team's performance in sports.

OCB affects athletes' performance in sports. Arthur et al. (2017) evaluated different leadership styles and their role in impacting the team players' performance in sports and developing organizational commitment behavior among the team players. They highlighted that sports leaders motivate team players significantly and influence the performance of the players. Prior studies (Jabeen et al., 2015; Darvin et al., 2018; Kao and Tsai, 2016) found positive relationship between role of leadership in developing OCB which tends to enhance sports team performance.

Transformational leaders in sports guide and shape the team players' performance positively, which strongly develops OCB among the team players where they play for the team, and hence their performance on the field is improved. Like previous researchers, Gorgulu (2019) highlighted that transformational leaders fulfill a significant role in developing a feeling of belongingness (OCB) among the team players and enhancing the players' performance in the field. Similarly, Flanagan (2019) also highlighted that these sports leaders collaborate with the team players to develop a sense of winning and commitment to perform for success. The literature analysis highlighted that athletes' organizational citizenship behavior influences their performance in the sports field. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6a: OCB moderates between the relationship of athlete leadership and team cohesion.

H6b: OCB moderates between athlete leadership and team performance.

As shown in Figure 1, a theoretical framework exhibits the association between the independent, mediating, moderating, and dependent variables.

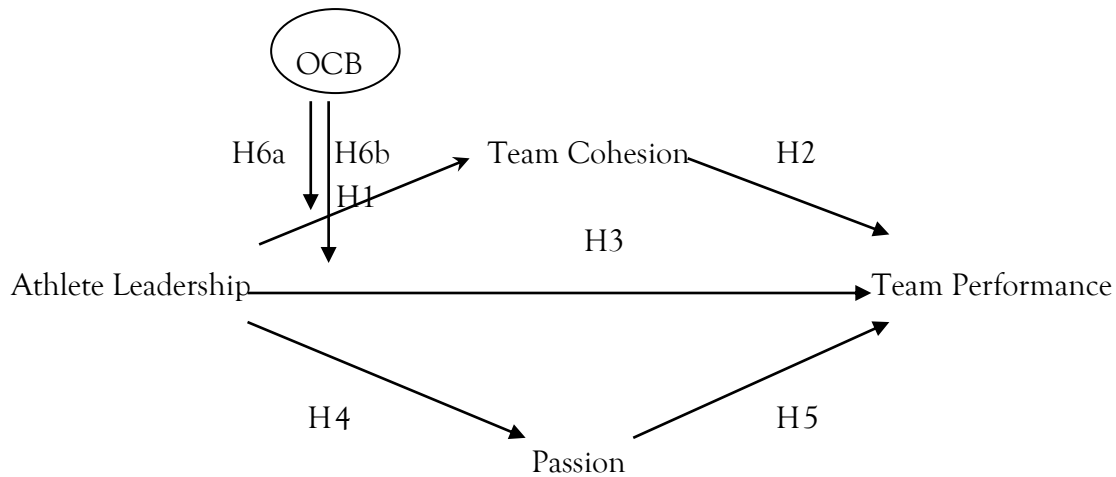


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3. Method

Data Collection and Research Design

The study was carried out using a sample of public sports councils in the UAE. We approached 2Sports councils selected randomly from a list of the top 5Sports councils—both the organization permitted to conduct the study. After prior approval of HR, we collected the data through a self-administrated survey. The specific criteria adopted to approach the respondents and request to participate in the study were: a) they should have an athletic experience of 2 years, and b) Their tenure in that Sports council is at least a year. Based on these criteria, we sent the survey to 400Athletes, of which we received 206 responses. After removing the six incomplete responses, we analyzed the data from 200 responses for a final response rate of 50%.

Sample

The research's target population was Dubai and Abu Dhabi Sports Council, located in the United Arab Emirates. The Sports council deals with the different athlete members and sports teams who are playing other sports types.

Measures

We applied a translation and back-translation process to ensure the continuity of context in English and Arabic. The questionnaire includes demographic details and sections related to study variables. The survey items were derived from previous studies. Athlete leadership was measured by 13 items and was derived from Chelladurai (1980). Team cohesiveness was measured by eight items and was adopted from Jenster and Steiler

(2011). Work passion was measured by 14 items and was derived from Vallerand (2003). OCB was measured by 24 items and was adapted from Podsakoff et al. (1990). Finally, 12 items adapted from Sigalet et al. (2013) measured the construct of team performance.

4. Results and Analysis

Demographic Analysis

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Out of 200 respondents, 42 percent of the respondents fall under 25-34 years of age. The majority of the respondents (79 percent) were males. Out of 200 respondents, 8 percent have their education below the high school level; while, 38 percent completed their high school, and 46 percent of respondents passed their higher diploma/bachelor's.

Table 1: Demographics of respondents (n=200)

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Age	18-24 Years	26	13.0
	25-34 Years	84	42.0
	35-44 Years	72	36.0
	45-54 Years	14	7.0
	55 or older	4	2.0
Gender	Male	158	79.0
	Female	42	21.0
Education	Below High School	16	8.0
	High School	76	38.0
	Higher Diploma/Bachelor	92	46.0
	Master Degree and Above	16	8.0
Sports	Football	134	67.0
	Cricket	12	6.0
	Basketball	2	1.0
	Volleyball	20	10.0
	Tennis	6	3.0
	Others	26	13.0
Leading Team	Yes	112	56.0
	No	88	44.0
Sports Experience	Below 5 Years	46	23.0
	5-10 Years	54	27.0
	11-20 Years	68	34.0
	21 Years & Above	32	16.0

Conversely, 13% of respondents expressed their association with some other sports. Moreover, they were asked about their captaincy to analyze whether they have led any team ever; thus, 56% responded in 'Yes', while 44% responded in 'No.' There was a dire need to take responses from experienced persons. Thus, participants were asked about their sports experience. 23% had below five years, while 27% had experience between 5 to 10 years. Similarly, 34% of respondents had experience between 11-20 years. In contrast, only 16% possessed either 21 years or more experience.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 provides the mean and standard deviation of the variables. Athlete leadership has a mean value of 4.006 with a standard deviation of 0.596. Similarly, team cohesion has an average value of 3.980 with a standard deviation of 0.7297, while; passion has an average value of 3.597 (SD=0.773). Moreover, organizational citizenship behavior and team performance mean and standard deviations of 4.133 (SD=0.579) and 4.037 (SD=0.525), respectively.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Athlete leadership	4.006	.596
Team cohesion	3.980	.729
Passion	3.597	.773
Organizational citizenship behavior	4.133	.579
Team performance	4.037	.525

Correlation Coefficients

Table 3 encompasses information about the correlation coefficient, which is utilized to evaluate the association between various latent constructs (Ly, Marsman, & Wagenmakers, 2018). All the correlation values are only acceptable if the significance value is less than 0.05, as it denotes that results are presented with a 95% confidence interval (Schober, 2018). Firstly, Athlete leadership has no significant association with team cohesion as the significance value is 0.153, greater than 0.05. Conversely, athlete leadership has a 22.8% positive correlation with passion at a significance level $p < 0.01$. Moreover, Athlete leadership has positive and significant correlation with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) ($r = 31\%$, $p < 0.01$) and team performance ($r = 71.2\%$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

		<i>AL</i>	<i>TC</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>OCB</i>	<i>TP</i>
Athlete leadership	Pearson Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Team cohesion	Pearson Correlation	.153				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.129				
3) Passion	Pearson Correlation	.228	-.037			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.712			
4)Organizational citizenship behavior	Pearson Correlation	.310	.368	.240		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.016		
5) Team performance	Pearson Correlation	.712	.216	.134	.442	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.031	.184	.000	

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows that team cohesion has a 15.3% correlation with athlete leadership whereas, passion, OCB, and team performance have 22.8%, 31.0%, and 71.2% correlation with athlete leadership. Passion does not correlate with team cohesion, whereas OCB and team performance have 36.8% and 21.6% correlation with team cohesion. OCB has a 24.0% correlation with passion, and team performance has 13.4% and 44.2% correlation with passion and OCB. Hence, team performance has the highest and strongest correlation with athlete leadership at a significance level of <0.1. To compare p-values to the significance level, a goodness of fit test was carried out.

Structural Model

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To assess model fit, we used the chi-square test, Tucker-Lewis index (Tucker & Lewis, 1973), comparative fit index (Bentler, 1990), and root mean square error of approximation (Steiger & Lind, 1980). Table 4 presents information about model fitness, including their standard threshold values. The value obtained through the Chi-square test value was 1.777, whereas the standard value was between 1-3. The normed fit index showed the calculated value as 0.901 while the standard value is set to ≥ 0.9 . The

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value obtained by the TLI Tucker lewis coefficient test was 0.929, whereas the standard value is $TLI \geq 0.9$. The value of the Goodness of fit index was 0.911, whereas the standard value is ≥ 0.9 . Also, the comparative fit index value was 0.952, whereas the standard value is $CFI \geq 0.9$ and the value of RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation, was 0.079, whereas the standard value is ≤ 0.08 . Hence, all values represent the relationship among variables as they fall within the suggested range. All the values of model fit indices are according to standard values; therefore, data is valid for further analysis.

Table 4: Model Fitness

<i>Fit Indices</i>	<i>Standard Values</i>	<i>Calculated Values</i>
χ^2/df	1-3	1.777
NFI	NFI \geq 0.9	0.901
TLI	TLI \geq 0.9	0.929
GFI	GFI \geq 0.9	0.911
CFI	CFI \geq 0.9	0.952
RMSEA	RMSEA \leq 0.08	0.079

Notes: * $p < 0.01$; $N = 200$. GFI = goodness of fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; NFI = normed fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation

Table 5 exhibits factor loadings, reliability, and validity. Previous studies have highlighted that items with lower than 0.3 factor loadings should be removed from analysis – as they do not have enough correlation to measure the latent constructs (Shevlin, 1998). Therefore, all the items which had factor loadings below 0.3 are removed. These items were involved in all the variables; thus, they are removed, and the final included items are shown in Table 5. All the items that have factor loadings above 0.3 are illustrated. From these factor loadings, we have calculated the reliability and validity of the scale. The existing literature highlights two critical methods to determine the scale's internal consistency: Cronbach's alpha (α) and Composite reliability (Peterson, 2013; Raykov, 1998). Usually, Cronbach's alpha is more prominent and extensively utilized; however, CR is more authentic and accurate. In both tests, the threshold value is 0.7; thus, any value below 0.7 is not acceptable. The Alpha and CR values are above 0.7; therefore, they prove the scale's internal consistency. In addition to this, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are utilized to evaluate convergent validity. The convergent validity states that the items which should be correlated are related to each other. Its threshold value is 0.5; thus, any value below 0.5 does not contain convergent validity. Also, all AVE values are greater than 0.5; therefore, the convergent validity is approved.

Table 5: Factor Loadings (λ), reliability (α and CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Items</i>	λ	α	CR	AVE
Athlete Leadership	AL3	.60	.810	.811	.527
	AL6	.50			
	AL9	.67			
	AL10	.68			
	AL11	.63			
	AL12	.59			
	AL13	.64			
Team Cohesion	TC1	.65	.732	.739	.502
	TC2	.54			
	TC5	.55			
	TC6	.82			
Passion	PN6	.61	.877	.884	.560
	PN7	.64			
	PN8	.63			
	PN9	.75			
	PN10	.69			
	PN11	.84			
	PN12	.73			
	PN13	.68			
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	ALT2	.69	.871	.872	.511
	ALT5	.70			
	C2	.71			
	C5	.66			
	CV1	.71			
	CV5	.71			
	CV9	.74			
Team Performance	TP2	.53	.801	.807	.509
	TP3	.60			
	TP4	.56			
	TP6	.54			
	TP9	.64			
	TP10	.76			
	TP11	.64			

Source: Author's findings

Table 6 depicts the direct effect of predictors on the dependent variable. Both mediators are also considered as dependent variables for path analysis. As per the study results, athlete leadership has no significant influence on team cohesion; therefore, Hypothesis 1 is rejected. Team cohesion shows no significant influence on team performance, and thus, Hypothesis 2 is rejected. Moreover, athlete leadership positively influences team performance, and this relationship is significant at $p < 0.01$. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Athlete leadership has a positive influence on passion with a significance value $p < 0.01$. Hence, Hypothesis 4 is accepted. Similarly, passion has no significant effect on team performance, and therefore, Hypothesis 5 is rejected. The positive influence explains that if the predictor is increased, the outcome will also increase and vice-versa.

Table 6: Direct Effect

<i>Hypotheses</i>		<i>Standardized Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>P</i>
Athlete Leadership →	Team Cohesion	.187	.122	1.539	.124
Athlete Leadership →	Passion	.295	.127	2.328	.020
Athlete Leadership →	Team Performance	.616	.064	9.672	.01
Team Cohesion →	Team Performance	.078	.051	1.531	.126
Passion →	Team Performance	-.015	.049	-.303	.762

Moderating Effects

As illustrated in table 7, the interaction term of athlete leadership and organizational citizenship behavior has been used in moderation analysis. The combined effect of these two variables has been analyzed on team cohesion and team performance. Also, the impact of athlete leadership is presented separately to examine what difference arises after combining the effect of moderation with athlete leadership.

Table 7 shows that athlete leadership has no significant influence on team cohesion; however, after combining the effect of the moderator (OCB), the athlete leadership(int) has a positive impact on team cohesion with a significance level of $p < 0.01$. It means organizational citizenship behavior positively moderates the relationship between athlete leadership and team cohesion and increases their positive strength on team cohesion. Thus, Hypothesis 6(a) is accepted.

Table 7: Interactions

		<i>Standardized Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>P</i>
Int	Team Cohesion	.110	.031	3.536	.009
Int	Team Performance	.047	.016	2.919	.004

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Athlete Leadership	Team Performance	.383	.102	3.742	.005
Athlete Leadership	Team Cohesion	-.379	.197	-1.925	.054

It shows that athlete leadership has an effect (0.383) on team performance with a significance value of $p < 0.01$; however, the moderator has decreased the impact of athlete leadership on team performance. According to Table 7, athlete leadership positively influences team performance in the moderating effects of organizational citizenship behavior, and this relationship is significant at $p < 0.01$. Thus, Hypothesis 6b is accepted. It shows that OCB moderates the relationship between athlete leadership and team performance. However, this moderating effect is negative because OCB influence has reduced the impact of athlete leadership on team performance.

As presented in Table 8, athletic leadership positively influences team cohesion so that the team members confront together. When team members are cohesive, it again affects the success and towards better team performance. In most situations, athletic leadership positively influences team performance, which brings success to members of the team. Athletic leadership influences work passion and further influences team performance which is another critical area. It has also been found out that having a strong feeling of sportsmanship also brings in a relationship between athletic leadership and team cohesion and athletic leadership and team performance on the other. Therefore, all the hypotheses that have been strongly supported have been explained with respect to p values that are positive and less than 0.1.

Table 8: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	<i>SE</i>	<i>Supported</i>
AL→TC	.72967	Yes
TC→TP	.52464	Yes
AL→TP	.52464	Yes
AL→P	.77272	Yes
P→TP	.52464	Yes
OCB→AL & TC	positive influence	Yes
OCB→AL & TP	positive influence	Yes

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study results provide empirical evidence supporting the hypothesized relationships. First, the researchers found that athlete leadership positively influences team cohesion. Therefore, the first hypothesis athlete leadership positively influences team cohesion was confirmed. The results support a prior study conducted by Vincer & Loughhead (2010) which demonstrated the consequence of athlete leadership behavior on perception of team cohesion. Therefore, we believe that more cohesive teams with dynamic team members seem to be more cooperative, dedicated, and influential in playing. They are more driven towards positive goals for a particular sport or a specific performance. If

there is no cohesion, it will affect the team members who are a part of the team and how that particular performance will occur. On the other hand, if cohesion exists, all team members can play reasonably well without looking for stress and tension factors. Therefore, team cohesiveness or understanding and playing as a team are essential for positive team performance.

Second, the researchers found that team cohesion positively influences team performance. This finding conforms with earlier studies. Athanasios et al. (2016) assessed the impact of cohesiveness among team players in the basketball teams and found its significant role in positively influencing team performance. Third, authors like (Fransen et al., 2017) in past studies believed in the importance of athletic leadership in increasing team performance. This has, in turn, been proven in the present research as well. The results have shown an immediate rise in team performance. Hypothesis 4, i.e., athlete leadership, influences work passion and has been proven through the present research and suggested by several articles. A previous study (Güllü, 2018) showed that the relationship between coach and player significantly and positively influences the player's passion for the sport. This relationship has been proven in the present research as well. Finally, several authors had even recognized sportsmanship as a necessary factor for all players. This is not just related to athlete leadership and team cohesion but team performance as well. Although athlete leadership has no significant impact on team cohesion; however, after combining the effect of the moderator (OCB), athlete leadership has a positive impact on team cohesion with a significance level of $p < 0.01$. It means organizational citizenship behavior positively moderates the relationship between athlete leadership and team cohesion and increases their positive strength on team cohesion. Therefore, Hypothesis 6(a) is accepted. This result is consistent with an earlier study (Jia & Hu, 2018). The team players who developed OCB tend to have a positive relationship with their coaches resulting in team cohesion. The team performance was also enhanced based on the significance of the relationship between a coach and a team player. Hence, it is evident that OCB is developed through the positive relationship between athlete leadership and team cohesion, influencing team performance in sports. Besides, athlete leadership positively influences team performance in the moderating effects of organizational citizenship behavior, and this relationship is significant at $p < 0.01$. Thus, Hypothesis 6(b), which states that OCB moderates the relationship between athlete leadership and team performance, is accepted. The same was affirmed in a previous study (Gorgulu, 2019), which showed that transformational leaders play a significant role in developing a sense of belongingness, organizational citizenship behavior among team players, and enhancing team performance.

6. Theoretical Implications

This study sheds light on the relationship among athlete leadership, team cohesion, work passion, OCB, and team performance. A model has been proposed and tested where moderating role of OCB and mediating role of team cohesion and work performance has

been tested. The study proposes an integrative framework and makes an essential contribution to the sports literature.

Team cohesiveness and understanding are highly valued among team players and thus, their valuable connections with team performance are strengthened in this research. Further, it has been proven that athlete leadership plays a significant role in improving team performance. Its relationship with work passion, team cohesion, and team performance gets highlighted. As a result of the positive role of OCB in developing team cohesion and team performance, it acts as a catalyst between the two variables.

7. Practical Implications

Given the many sports team dimensions that athlete leaders influence, sports teams should nurture environments that promote athlete leadership at different levels. Athlete leaders should encourage the entire team (Glenn and Horn, 1993) to develop a sense of team cohesion and work passion. To intensify the relationship between athlete leaders and team cohesiveness, team members often demonstrate OCB. It happens when team members regard it as a fragment of their job (Loughead et al., 2010; Morrison 1994; Tepper et al., 2001) and believe it will assure self-interests and motives (Haworth and Levy 2001; Hui et al., 2000, 2004). Overall, this research serves as a guide to athlete leaders to raise team performance by acknowledging the significance and influence of athlete leadership, cohesiveness, passion, and OCB on team performance. Since this study has been conducted in the UAE, the findings shall contribute to the sports industry, especially to the growing sports industry in the Arab region.

8. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The study population was limited to Abu Dhabi and Dubai and cannot be generalized to other Emirates and national contexts. This study has identified the relationship between athlete leadership, organizational citizenship behavior, team cohesion, and passion for team performance; however, formal and informal motivators can also have a remarkable repercussion on team performance. Hence, the cultural aspects of leaders with associated team members are a significant area of further study. A range of other factors like team dynamics and their impact on leadership and team members also need to be explored. Further, an essential area of coach development programs also possess immense knowledge to explore regarding athlete leadership.

9. Conclusion

This study developed and empirically tested a conceptual framework explaining the relationship among athlete leadership, team cohesion, work passion, organizational citizenship behavior, and team performance. The study was conducted on athlete members and teams playing different sports in Dubai and Abu Dhabi Sports Council located in the United Arab Emirates. The findings explain that athletic leadership influences team performance positively. There was no significant influence of athlete

leadership on team cohesion and no significant impact on team performance. However, athlete leadership positively influences team performance in the moderating effects of organizational citizenship behavior.

The results obtained from this study shall aid sport psychology consultants, coaches, athletes, and researchers in understanding how athlete leadership is related to team performance in sports surroundings. The present study suggests formulating strategies and organizing sports teams to exhibit escalated team performance. It delivers a better experience of the factors that influence team performance and supports athlete leaders and team members plan a strategy to develop and maximize team performance.

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