

The effect of coaches' ethical leadership behavior on athletes' accountability and performance of Iraq player: Moderating role of psychological control

Emad Toma Radi^{1*}, Louay Abdulsttar Salal², Shaimaa Jassim³

Abstract

Coaches play a crucial effect on player performance. The positive attitude and guidance of coaches improve the performance of restricted players. The national and international players in Iraq must contend with unethical conduct on the part of their coaches. This research aims to increase players' performance in Iraq by fostering a favorable interaction between coaches and athletes. This research attempted to investigate the impact of coaches' ethical leadership conduct on the accountability and performance of Iraqi athletes, with psychological control serving as a moderator. This study collected data using a Likert scale questionnaire, and the participants were Iraqi gamers who played various games. 400 replies are analyzed in this study, and the structural equation model is employed to analyze the data. This study concludes that psychological control moderates the relationship between coaches' ethical leadership conduct, athletes' accountability, and players' performance. This research's theoretical framework is an important contribution to the corpus of knowledge. The practical ramifications of this study are remarkable for enhancing the performance of athletes in Iraq. The study demonstrates that Iraqi athletes require ethical coaching to improve their performance.

Keywords. Leadership behavior, ethical leadership, athletes' accountability, player' performance, psychological control

1. Introduction

Trainers impact athletes' performance in any sport (Coutinho, Gonçalves, et al., 2022; Fang et al., 2022). The trainers are maximizing their efforts to improve the performance of their athletes in national and international competitions. Indeed, the athletes play independently, but their coaches' conduct is crucial (Ilxomovich, 2022). Işın et al. (2022) found that the best players in the world are more loyal to their coaches because they attribute their best performance to their coaches' abilities. For decades, the performance of Iraqi players has not improved relative to that of their counterparts (Jastrzębska et al., 2022). In this sense, the players must enhance their performance while receiving the appropriate instruction. Scandinavian athletes perform the best because the sports industry affords them the option to receive the greatest coaching for performance enhancement (Benítez-Sillero et al., 2021). In this sense, the performance of Iraqi players must be enhanced through the employment of the greatest coaches by the sports board (Sun et al., 2022). Athletes' performance depends on cooperation with coaches to obtain suitable direction and enhance their performance creatively (Marzouki et al., 2022). Iraqi athletes are less trained than Yemeni athletes, whose performance is

superior (Gavanda et al., 2022). As a result of their coaches' welcoming demeanor, the Yemeni players perform well in their respective sports (Wilczyńska et al., 2021). Emotionally robust athletes are more motivated to build solid relationships with other athletes and coaches to improve their performance. Thus, the coaches' unfavorable attitude can demotivate the athletes from performing well (Bishop et al., 2022). However, it is the role of the coaches to inspire the athletes to achieve their best results (Abdullah et al., 2016). The coaches of the Iraqi soccer team train their players less than the trainers of the Japanese soccer team (Lai et al., 2020). Therefore, athlete accountability is required to increase performance and achieve better results.

As they engage directly with athletes, coaches have a crucial role in enhancing their performance (McGuckin et al., 2022). However, players must be loyal to coaches for their educational benefit (Lorenz et al., 2013). In this respect, the performance of players and athletes is directly dependent on athletes (Matsuzaki et al., 2022). However, coaches that motivate their athletes and train them with digital equipment increase athletes' performance most effectively (McGuigan, Wright, & Fleck, 2012). As it directly influences the athletes' conduct, the coaches' leadership behavior should be good (Denison, 2007).

¹ Mustansiriyah University - Faculty of Basic Education- Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences/Iraq. emadiraq516.edbs@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq, jod7moami.edbs@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq

² Mustansiriyah University - Faculty of Basic Education- Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences/Iraq.

³ Mustansiriyah University - Faculty of Basic Education- Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences/Iraq.

Indeed, the performance of athletes is crucial, but their coaches' roles and responsibilities directly impact their performance (Cronin et al., 2022). Various aspects of an athlete's performance have been analyzed in the studies outlined above. To date, no research has investigated the moderating effect of psychological control on the association between coach behavior and player performance. This research attempted to investigate the impact of coaches' ethical leadership conduct on the accountability and performance of Iraqi athletes, with psychological control serving as a moderator. This study has opted to contribute to the literature and investigate these factors to determine how coaches in Iraq should act ethically to improve athletes' performance. This research has contributed to the body of knowledge by establishing a theoretical framework for contemporary factors. The theoretical ramifications of this study are outstanding because the study has introduced new variables based on these recommendations. The second practical implication of this study is to increase the performance of players in Iraq through psychological Control and ethical leadership conduct on the part of coaches. The prospects of this research give a road map for investigating the literature in additional underexplored dimensions.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Athletes' performance depends on their leaders' motivation (Strid, Andersson, & Öjehagen, 2018). In this aspect, the coaches are the proper leaders for the players, as they inspire and train them to better their performance (Steele et al., 2009). The American baseball team is doing well and enjoying victories because its coaches ethically urge the players to improve their performance (Allahabadi, Gatto, & Pandya, 2022). Any team's coaches should have a more positive attitude toward their players. In any game, if coaches do not provide good support for the players, the players' performance will suffer (Coutinho, Abade, et al., 2022).

Similarly, athletes with high self-efficacy are more optimistic and do not panic when their coach behaves poorly. Positive coach attitudes are essential for optimal player participation (Guy et al., 2015). The coaches must be trained and create cordial relationships with the athletes (Lee et al., 2017). The optimal performance of players is determined by their attitudes, which are cultivated through interaction with their instructors (Hamid & Assad, 2021). The players' leaders who are performing well provide positive reinforcement, which motivates them to perform better.

In contrast, the players in Indonesia are less productive than their European counterparts because they lack access to sophisticated equipment (Ramezani et al., 2022). The football team's coaches inspire the players to achieve their finest performance. In Argentina, football is a popular sport, and coaches with exemplary character are sought to increase player performance (Ramezani et al., 2022). To determine the players' performance, it is also required to assess their accountability.

There must be checks and balances on athletes' performance because they represent the team (Nower et al., 2018). The coaches should evaluate the athletes' performance and choose the squad members (Guy et al., 2015). Indeed, team selection should not entail any element of bias (Gorczyński, Coyle, & Gibson, 2017). In contrast, the player with the highest motivation performs better than those with the lowest drive (Yang, Dai, & Miao, 2021). Unquestionably, the players' motivation is directly influenced by coaches' attitudes and directives, making them crucial (Lee et al., 2017). Similarly, coaches should grow their teams ethically, and only a squad with a positive attitude is sure to play well and win the game (Simons & Bird, 2022). Strong psychological control is associated with team success. Leaders are responsible for facilitating the players' best performance in any game (Ramezani et al., 2022). Seniors and coaches should train and inspire the players to have self-control for their optimal performance (Hamid & Assad, 2021). Indeed, player performance is crucial for optimal game development and innovative moves (Gorczyński et al., 2017). The coaches' instructions help athletes create good attitudes about the game and avoid performance-related sports anxiety (Gorczyński et al., 2017). Without a doubt, the performance of these athletes is enhanced when their instructors train them effectively (Allahabadi et al., 2022). The finest trait for athletes to improve their performance is emotional Control (Nower et al., 2018). In the meantime, coach bias and unethical training might diminish players' performance (Allahabadi et al., 2022).

H1. Coaches' ethical leadership behavior has an impact on athletes' accountability.

H2. Coaches' ethical leadership behavior has an impact on players' performance.

According to Allahabadi et al. (2022), in every sport, the managers must support the athletes in providing their best effort. The elders and coaches should educate the athletes on appropriate behavior and encourage them to play (Coutinho, Abade, et al., 2022). Guy et al. (2015) showed that a team's performance in a sport is crucial to its optimal development and innovative techniques. According to one study, the coaches' instructions

mitigated the players' perceptions of the competition and performance-related athletic stress (Lee et al., 2017). Hamid and Assad (2021) demonstrated unequivocally that their performance improves when these athletes receive proper training from their coaches. As Simons and Bird proved, emotional control is the most important trait for improving athletic performance. In the interim, unethical training and prejudiced teachers may hinder teams' performance (Ramezani et al., 2022). Since players compete again for the group, Poppendieck, Faude, Wegmann, and Meyer argue that there must be controls and checks on how well they do in a game (2013). The athletes must be selected for the team after the trainers evaluate their skills (Yang et al., 2021). In reality, Guy et al. (2015) state that bias cannot play a role in the team selection process.

In comparison to other competitors, a player with a strong work ethic performs better than those with a depressed disposition (Lee et al., 2017). Instructors must have the best attitude possible (Yang et al., 2021), and athletes must follow their rules and regulations because they are personally motivated by them (Nower et al., 2018). Similarly, Allahabadi et al. (2022) noted that the trainers must develop the team adequately, and the team's optimism is the only guarantee that they will play well enough and win the competition. Highly psychologically disciplined athletes do admirably in teams (Lee, Kim, & Joon-Ho, 2013).

The trainers must be knowledgeable and have a positive rapport with the athletes (Fang et al., 2022). According to Coutinho, Gonçalves, et al. (2022) the mentality of athletes, which is established via interaction with their coaches, defines their highest capacity. The enthusiastic support of the management of high-performing athletes (Ilxomovich, 2022) inspires others to compete more effectively. In

contrast, Benítez-Sillero et al. (2021) concluded that Indonesian professionals are substantially less effective than European players because they lack access to modern equipment. Trainers of soccer players motivate their players to offer their best effort (Gavanda et al., 2022). Football is a popular sport in Brazil (Wilczyńska et al., 2021), and ethical coaches are sought to help players improve their performance.

Moreover, according to Ehmann et al. (2022), assessing athletes' ability requires an emphasis on responsibility. Players' efficacy is determined by their leadership's zeal (Allahabadi et al., 2022). The teachers are effective sports managers because they motivate and prepare the athletes for greater scores (Coutinho, Abade, et al., 2022). Due to the efforts of the club's trainers to ethically urge the players to improve quality (Guy et al., 2015), the England baseball team is also doing well and enjoying victory (Lee et al., 2017). According to Hamid and Assad (2021), teachers of any club should strive to take a more pleasant attitude toward the members. Simons and Bird (2022) demonstrated that the players' performance would drop in any match if the coaches did not provide them with positive reinforcement. According to Poppendieck et al. (2013), emotionally intelligent athletes are more optimistic and do not dread when their trainer performs poorly. Newer et al. establish that trainers' positive attitudes are crucial for athletes to perform at their peak (2018). Moreover, Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical foundation of the investigation.

H3. Psychological control moderates the relationship between coaches' ethical leadership behavior and athletes' accountability.

H4. Psychological control moderates the relationship between coaches' ethical leadership behavior and players' performance.

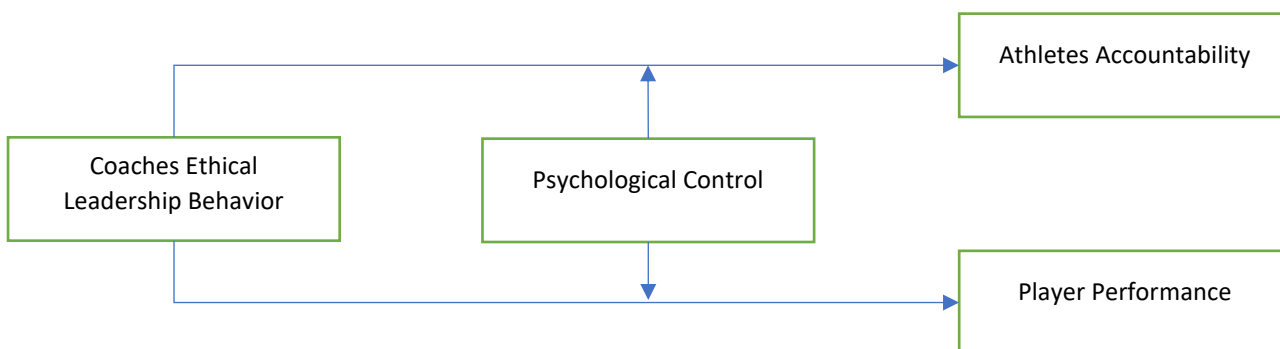


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

3. Method

This study has altered scale items from previous research to examine the association between several variables. The

survey was constructed using a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale questionnaire is suitable for data collection from respondents. This study's respondents were Iraqi athletes competing in various sports, and their responses

were required to determine the effect of coaches' ethical leadership style on athletes' accountability and performance. To obtain cross-sectional data, 760 questionnaires were printed and administered. In this regard, 400 returned questionnaires were examined for data collection. Adaptations were made to the scale items for coaches' ethical leadership behavior to quantify their impact on player performance. The validity of these scale items was validated by previous research.

In this analysis, items having factor loadings below 0.60 were disregarded. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the validity of these items. Similar to the exploratory factor analysis, the confirmatory factor analysis was evaluated to collect the scale items. The alpha value of these scale components was not less than 0.70. These items were therefore altered from Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004). The psychological control scale items were modified to assess their moderating effect on player performance. The validity of these scale items was validated by previous research. In this analysis, items having factor loadings below 0.60 were disregarded. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the validity of these items. Similar to the exploratory factor analysis, the confirmatory factor analysis was evaluated to collect the scale items. The alpha value for these scale components was 0.87.

Consequently, these questions were altered by Spreitzer (1995) to examine the impact of athletes' accountability on players' performance. The source of the scale study confirmed the validity of these scale items. In this analysis, items having factor loadings below 0.60 were disregarded. However, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the validity of these items. In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis was tested to gather the scale items. These scale items had an alpha value greater than 0.80. These items were subsequently altered by Bateman, Colin Wilson, and Bingham (2002). The player performance scale items were modified to assess the relationship between player performance and coaches' ethical behavior. The current study established the validity of these scale item components. In this regard, questionnaire questions with factor loadings below 0.70 were disregarded. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the validity of these items.

Similarly, the confirmatory factor analysis was examined to collect scale items for the investigation. The alpha value of these scale components was not less than 0.70. These items were therefore adapted from Bateman et al. (2002). Experts in the field of research confirmed the face validity of these items before administering the questionnaire to participants. In addition, this study explored a structural equation model for data analysis.

Table 1

Scale Items

Variables	Measurement Items
Player Performance	There are clear targets established for the team activities. There are targets for the level of performance of the team. There are regular reports on how the players are performing. The team is aware of its objectives and committed to achieving them.
Athletes' Accountability	All players of the team are adequately trained. All players of the team are committed to performance. All players are performing professionally in the team. All players have resources for their training and performance.
Psychological Control	The game I play is very important to me. My team performance is personally meaningful to me. I am confident about my ability to play on the team. I have significant autonomy in determining how I play in the team.
Coaches' Ethical Leadership Behavior	I like my coach. I trust my coach. I respect my coach. I appreciate the sacrifices my coach has experienced to improve his performance. When my coach coaches me, I feel at ease. When my coach coaches me, I feel responsive to their efforts. When my coach coaches me, I am ready to do my best. When my coach coaches me, I adopt a friendly stance

4. Results

4.1 Convergent Validity

PLS Algorithm computations are used to determine this study's convergent validity. The study's results proved the reliability and validity of the scale items (see Figure 2). Fornell and Larcker suggest a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 as

a measure of reliability (1981). Moreover, Fornell and Larcker (1981) advocate a value of 0.50 for factor loadings and 0.70 for composite reliability (CR). The recommended value for average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.50, according to Ramayah et al. (2018). This study has attained all recommended values, and Table 2 contains the reliability results.

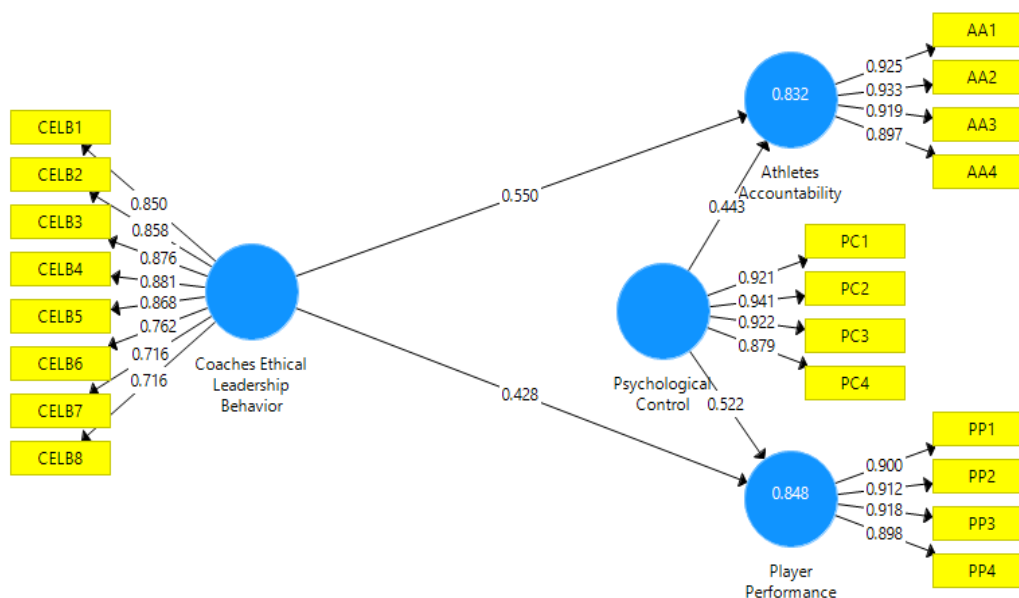


Figure 1. Measurement Model

Table 2

Measurement Items and Validity

Variables	Items	Factor Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Athletes Accountability	AA1	0.925	0.938	0.956	0.844
	AA2	0.933			
	AA3	0.919			
	AA4	0.897			
Coaches Ethical Leadership Behavior	CELB1	0.850	0.929	0.942	0.670
	CELB2	0.858			
	CELB3	0.876			
	CELB4	0.881			
	CELB5	0.868			
	CELB6	0.762			
	CELB7	0.716			
	CELB8	0.716			
Psychological Control	PC1	0.921	0.928	0.949	0.823
	PC2	0.941			
	PC3	0.922			
	PC4	0.879			
Player Performance	PP1	0.900	0.936	0.954	0.839
	PP2	0.912			
	PP3	0.918			
	PP4	0.898			

4.2 Discriminant Validity

This study employed a sophisticated technique to assess the discriminant validity. The discriminant validity indicates the differentiation between the study's measuring items. In this sense, the Heteritrait-Monotrait method of discriminant validity is suitable for evaluating the

distinction between the items used to measure the influence of a single variable. Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2001) show that HTMT values should not exceed a discriminant validity of 0.90. The outcomes of this test, which demonstrate the study's discriminant validity, are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Discriminant Validity

	Athletes Accountability	Coaches Ethical Leadership Behavior	Player Performance	Psychological Control
Athletes Accountability				
Coaches Ethical Leadership Behavior	0.833			
Player Performance	0.784	0.794		
Psychological Control	0.785	0.684	0.801	

4.3 Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modelling

To determine the structural model in this study, the PLS Bootstrapping calculations were considered (see Table 4 and Figure 3). The findings revealed that the

influence of coaches' ethical leadership behavior is supported by athletes' accountability ($\beta = 0$, and $t = 0$). Moreover, the findings discovered that the influence of coaches' ethical leadership behavior is supported by players' performance ($\beta = 0$, and $t = 0$).

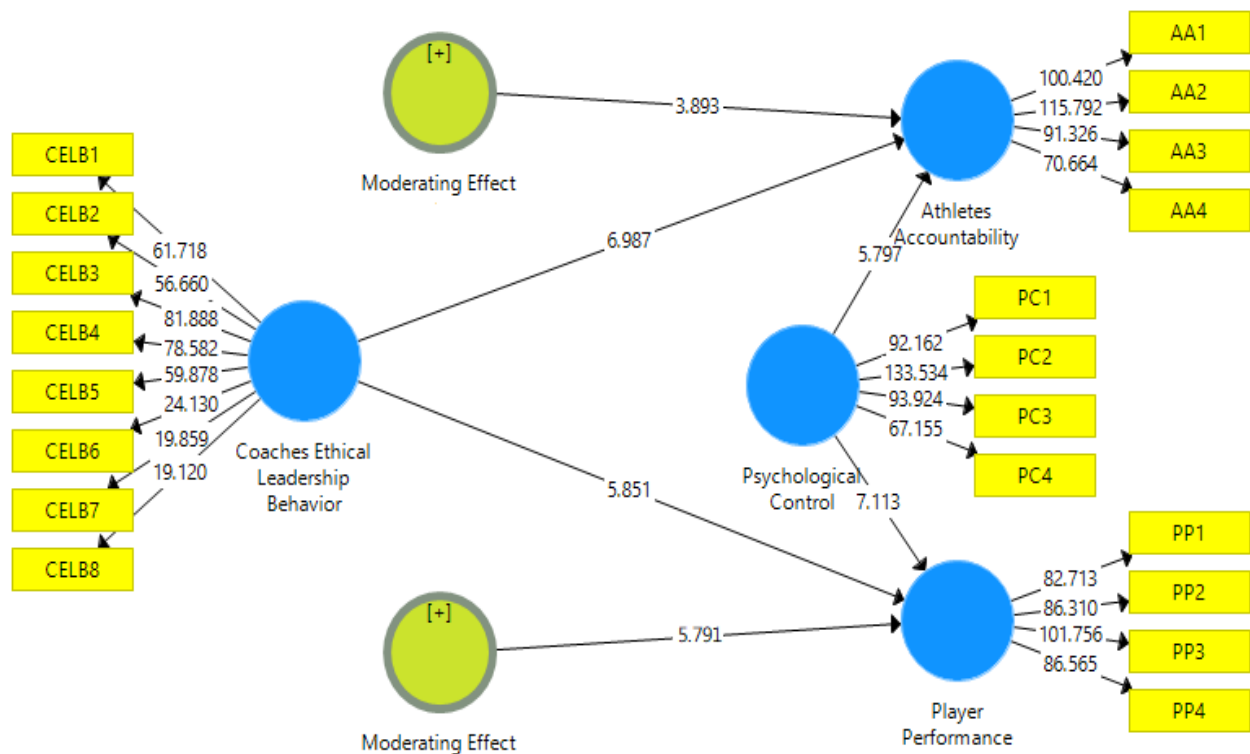


Figure 3. Structural Model

Thirdly, the findings supported the moderating impact of psychological control on the influence of coaches' ethical leadership behavior and athletes' accountability ($\beta = 0$, and $t = 0$). According to these

findings, psychological control moderates and strengthen the positive relationship between coaches' ethical leadership behavior and athletes' accountability (see Figure 4).

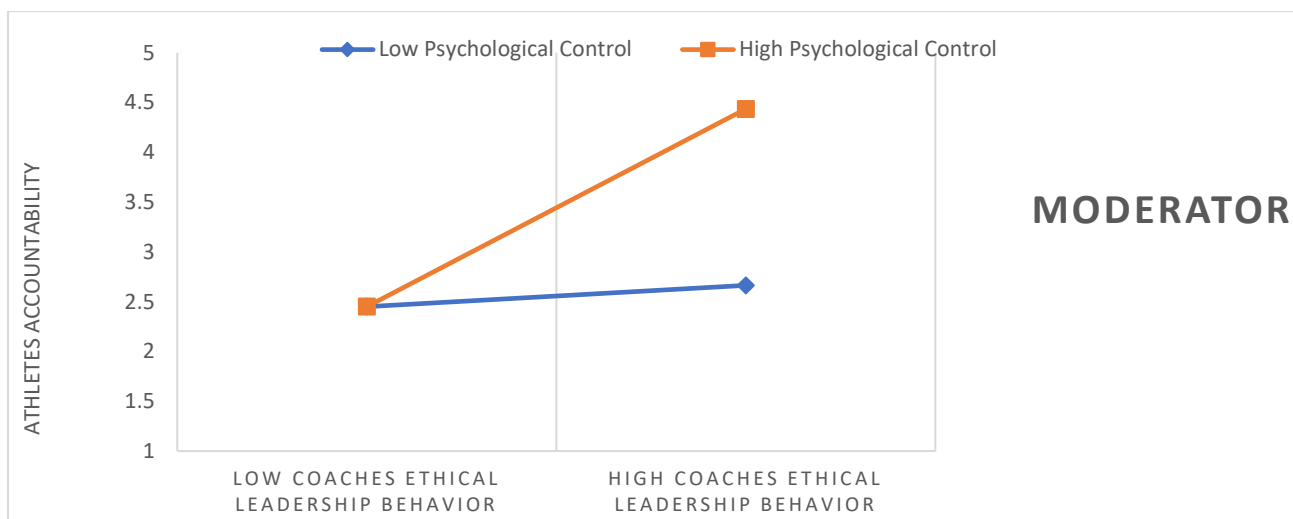


Figure 4. Moderation on Athletes' Accountability

Lastly, the results discovered that the moderating influence of psychological control between the influence of coaches' ethical leadership behavior and players' performance is supported ($\beta = 0$, and $t = 0$).

According to these findings, psychological control moderates and strengthen the positive relationship between coaches' ethical leadership behavior and player' performance (see Figure 5).

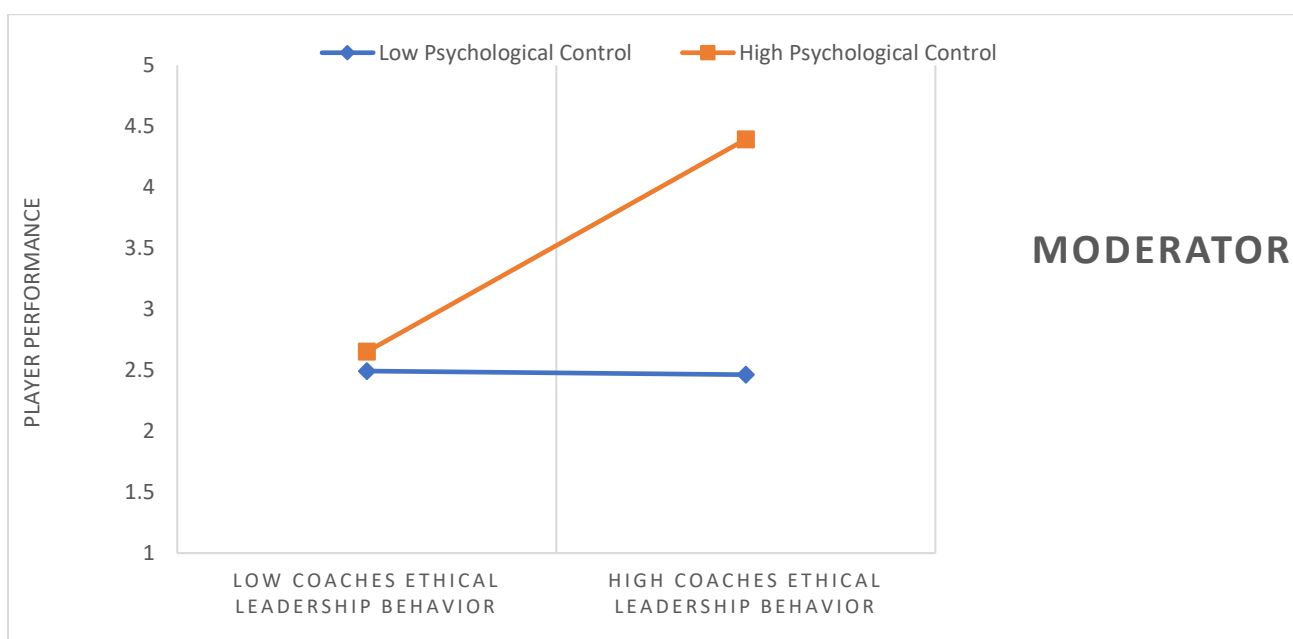


Figure 5. Moderation of Player's Performance

Table 4

Results of Path Coefficient

Path	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Findings
Coaches Ethical Leadership Behavior -> Athletes Accountability	0.550	0.079	6.987	0.000	Accepted
Coaches Ethical Leadership Behavior -> Player Performance	0.428	0.073	5.851	0.000	Accepted
Moderating Effect 1 -> Athletes Accountability	0.143	0.037	3.893	0.000	Accepted
Moderating Effect 2 -> Player Performance	0.443	0.076	5.797	0.000	Accepted

5. Conclusion

In summary, the outcomes of this study are noteworthy and consistent with the current literature concerning players' performance and the acceptability of sportsmen. The supported hypotheses of this study are significant for improving player performance in Iraq. This study concludes that there is a correlation between coaches' ethical leadership and athletes' accountability. Regarding the performance of players, Fang et al. (2022)'s research found a similar link. Indeed, players' performance is crucial to the team's success, but coaches must treat athletes with respect to boost their performance (Coutinho, Gonçalves, et al., 2022; Ilxomovich, 2022; Işın et al., 2022). The positive attitude of athletes might inspire the players to improve their performance and win the game. The training of players is essential, and coaches must strengthen the players' abilities through skill development (Jastrzębska et al., 2022). Similarly, the association between coaches' ethical leadership behavior and player performance is corroborated by the findings of this study (Sun et al., 2022). Moreover, Marzouki et al. (2022) described the same association while discussing the athletes' performance. Certainly, as Gavanda et al. (2022) indicated, players' performance is crucial for the team. Still, according to Wilczyńska et al. (2021), trainers should act to increase players' performance. Conversely, the enthusiastic attitude of players might motivate junior players to improve their performance in the last phase of the game (Ehmann et al., 2022; Prien et al., 2020). Similarly, players' drills are essential, and coaches should enhance team performance with a suitable increase in support (Fang et al., 2022).

In addition, the study found that psychological control significantly moderates the relationship between coaches' ethical leadership conduct and athletes' accountability (Coutinho, Gonçalves, et al., 2022). In addition, the study found that psychological control moderated the relationship between coaches' ethical leadership conduct and players' performance (Jastrzębska et al., 2022). Undoubtedly, the findings of this study are extraordinary, but the results of earlier investigations are comparable (Benítez-Sillero et al., 2021). Significantly, psychological control's moderating effect increases the relationship between coaches and players (Ehmann et al., 2022). Coutinho, Gonçalves, et al. (2022) likewise discussed the need for emotional intelligence for advanced practice. The players with the most psychological control are optimistic about their performance (Ehmann et al., 2022; Prien et al., 2020).

Conversely, players with a weak psychological state are less productive and perform less well (Coutinho, Gonçalves, et

al., 2022). This study concludes that the relationship assumed by the study's theoretical framework is substantial. It was underlined that coaches in Iraq should create positive leadership with their players and consider ethical considerations while evaluating player performance.

6. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research's theoretical framework is an important contribution to the corpus of knowledge. Prior research did not explore the relationship revealed by this study, which makes the theoretical ramifications of this study noteworthy. This research has determined that coaches' ethical conduct is essential and appropriate for athletes. This large effect of coaches' ethical leadership behavior on the performance of athletes was not previously discussed. On the other side, this study reveals the strong influence of coaches' ethical leadership conduct on the performance of their players.

Similarly, the literature of the past was mute regarding this relationship. In addition, this study has added two moderating associations to the existing body of literature. The moderating effect of psychological control between coaches' ethical leadership behavior and athletes' accountability is a significant addition of this research to the field of player performance. In addition, the moderating effect of psychological control between coaches' ethical leadership conduct and players' performance is a significant contribution of this study to the field of players' performance. These linkages have contributed to the advancement of knowledge, as scientists did not consider them in prior studies. Therefore, this research has contributed to a body of knowledge-rich literature.

The practical ramifications of this study are remarkable for enhancing the performance of athletes in Iraq. The study demonstrates that ethical coaching should be provided to Iraqi athletes since it greatly impacts their performance. The second finding of this study is that players' performance can be influenced if the trainers are well-educated and possess the emotional intelligence to foresee and creatively manage player issues. Similarly, the approach's positivism and optimism can improve players' performance as they learn the style of games. To increase players' performance in any game, the use of foul language and inappropriate gestures is strictly prohibited. The players should have excellent emotional control since, with it, they can perform effectively. For the players' success in Iraq, there should be cordial coordination between the players and the coaches, and the coaches' optimistic attitude should be bolstered.

On the one hand, players should be held accountable for improving their performance most effectively. On the other hand, coaches should be held accountable for monitoring their athletes' training practices. These consequences are essential for enhancing the performance of athletes in Iraq and fostering a culture of sports inside the country.

7. Future Directions

This study has determined that psychological control moderates the relationship between coaches' ethical leadership conduct, athletes' accountability, and players' performance. On the one hand, this research's theoretical framework is an important contribution to the corpus of knowledge. Second, the practical implications of this study

for enhancing the performance of players in Iraq are remarkable. However, this investigation has certain limitations. Initially, a random sample strategy was used to acquire data that validated the hypothesis of this study. Future studies must collect data using a cluster-based sampling method to determine the outcomes. In addition, the moderating role of psychological control has been examined. In light of the literature's explanation of the effect of player motivation on performance, future research should examine the relationship between player motivation and performance. This study has used the ethical leadership behavior of coaches as an independent variable. However, other aspects also affect player performance. Thus, future research should investigate the relationship between player resources and performance. Thus, the neglected field of literature will be investigated.

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