

Leader Self-sacrifice in Sports Organizations

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Abstract : Research on leadership in sports organizations has proved extremely fruitful in recent decades, favoring the growing and diffusion of figures such as mental coaches, trainers, etc. Recent scholarly attention on organizations has been directed towards the phenomenon of leader self-sacrifice, wherein leaders who display such behavior are perceived by their followers as more effective, charismatic, and legitimate compared to those who prioritize self-interest. This growing interest reflects the importance of leaders who prioritize the collective welfare over personal gain, as they inspire greater loyalty, trust, and dedication among their followers, ultimately fostering a more cohesive and high-performing team environment. However, there is limited literature on the mechanisms through which self-sacrifice influences both group dynamics (such as cohesion and team identification) and individual factors (such as self-competence). The aim of the study is to analyze the impact of the leader self-sacrifice on cohesion, team identification and self-competence. Team identification is a crucial determinant of individual identity, delineated by the extent to which a team member aligns with a specific organizational team rather than broader social collectives. This association motivates members to synchronize their actions with the collective interests of the group, thereby fostering cohesion among its constituents, and cultivating a shared sense of purpose and unity within the team. In the domain of team sports, particularly soccer and water polo, two studies involving 447 participants (men = 238, women = 209) between 22 and 35 years old ($M = 26.36$, $SD = 5.51$) were conducted. The first study employed a correlational methodology to investigate the predictive capacity of self-sacrifice on cohesion, team identification, self-efficacy, and self-competence. The second study utilized an experimental design to explore the relationship between team identification and self-sacrifice. Together, these studies provided comprehensive insights into the multifaceted nature of leader self-sacrifice and its profound implications for group cohesion and individual well-being within organizational settings. The findings underscored the pivotal role of leader self-sacrifice in not only fostering stronger bonds among team members but also in enhancing critical facets of group dynamics, ultimately contributing to the overall effectiveness and success of the team.

Keywords : cohesion, leadership, self-sacrifice, sports organizations, team-identification

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