
CONCEPTIONS AND LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE BRAZILIAN SOCCER COACHES

CONCEPÇÕES E PRINCÍPIOS DE PRÁTICA DE LIDERANÇA DE TREINADORES DE ALTA PERFORMANCE NO FUTEBOL BRASILEIRO

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar as concepções e princípios de prática de liderança de treinadores de alta performance do futebol brasileiro. Participaram do estudo, por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas, cinco treinadores de futebol masculino que já atuaram na 1ª divisão brasileira, conquistando títulos estaduais e nacionais e com experiência em equipes e seleções estrangeiras. As principais evidências apontam para competências gerais, estratégias de gestão, conhecimento profissional, princípios e valores individuais. Conclui-se que os treinadores possuem conhecimento processual tácito instintivo que resulta numa filosofia de liderança desconexa e competências interpessoais mais evidentes. Sugere-se que os treinadores utilizem o modelo trifásico de eficácia de liderança e a prática da reflexão sistematiza de forma a potenciarem a sua eficácia de liderança.

Palavras-chave: Treinador, Filosofia de liderança, Alta performance, Futebol

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyze the conceptions and leadership principles of high-performance coaches in Brazilian soccer. Participants were five male soccer coaches who have worked in the Brazilian first division, winning state and national titles, and having experience in international teams. Semi-structured interviews were performed. Main evidences show several competencies, management strategies, professional knowledge, principles, and personal values. We concluded that the coaches have tacit instinctive procedural knowledge that results in a disconnected leadership philosophy and interpersonal knowledge more evident. It is suggested that coaches use the three-phase leadership model and the practice of systematic reflection in order to enhance their leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: Coach, Leadership principles, High-performance, Soccer.

Introduction

The leadership practice of sports coaches must be guided by their leadership philosophy². Their ideas, principles, values, and beliefs influence and guide their actions consistently in the conduction of the team leadership process, with it being fundamental that coaches establish some criteria to evaluate the alignment between what they think and what they actually do³. Upon considering that the leadership effectiveness of a coach is directly linked to a shorter distance between what they think (idea) and what they do (action), Gomes and Resende⁴ developed the *Modelo Trifásico de Eficácia de Liderança* (MTEL, Three-Phase Leadership Effectiveness Model).

The MTEL does not disregard the organizational culture nor the characteristics of the leader and those they lead to analyze the relationship between *leadership principles* (the philosophy of the leader), the *leadership practice* (the actions of the leader), and the *leadership criteria*, which are indicators that a leader uses to evaluate the implementation of their leadership philosophy. Gomes² and Gomes and Resende⁴ named as *congruence hypothesis* the idea that the smaller the distance between the *conceptual cycle of a coach* (their ideas, principles, values, and beliefs) and the *practical cycle of a coach* (their actions to implement their philosophy), the more effective the leadership of that coach is^{3,4}.

The leadership effectiveness of a sports coach enhances the performance of athletes and staff, raising the team efficiency level, promoting performance, and delivering sports results^{5,6}. Moreover, the professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge, when added to the four "Cs" (competence, connection, confidence, and character) in relationships with athletes and the experience in the contexts of interventions, contribute to the coach being more effective⁷. In addition to being important professional goals, these are essential requirements for the practice of the sports coach in the context of high-performance activity^{8,9}.

Although these elements are clearly situated in the scientific agenda of sports coaching, in Brazilian reality, competitive results are essential for a soccer coach. The importance of competitive performance becomes essential for the maintenance of the work of coaches in professional soccer, a context of high complexity and hostility, in which coach turnover is very common¹⁰. This scenario has aroused the interest of the scientific community regarding the complex context of activity of high-performance coaches^{5,11,12}, particularly in the study of leadership effectiveness, in which case researchers seek to understand the factors that contribute to its success¹³. Among the most mentioned factors are the philosophy of the coaches, their leadership styles, the specific characteristics of the leaders, their team members, and the context in which the leadership takes place¹⁴. Introducing the fundamental principles of the academy of the Sevilla Fútbol Club in Spain¹⁵, they argue that the coaches must have a clear philosophy of activity, accompanied by a set of values in close connection with the history and culture of the club, which presupposes an evident concern with the establishment of clear ideas that the coaches must have and that should guide their activity. Few empirical studies address the topic of leadership in Brazilian soccer. Costa et al.¹⁶ investigated the leadership profile of 20 coaches of the A Series of Brazilian soccer from the Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS) questionnaire and identified the importance of the autocratic style combined with aspects related to training and instruction. When investigating the competencies necessary to perform the role of coach, Silva et al.¹⁷ interviewed 16 soccer players who mentioned leadership as one of the interpersonal competencies required to practice the profession, but not in the sense of considering its effectiveness.

The scientific curiosity about the studies on the effectiveness of high-performance coaches, combined with the lack of research on the philosophies (ideas, principles, values) that permeate the intervention of soccer coaches in Brazil, justify some concerns, namely about the leadership philosophy of high-performance coaches in Brazil, how they put this leadership philosophy into practice, and what are the effectiveness criteria of this leadership philosophy. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the conceptions and principles of leadership practice of high-performance coaches in Brazilian soccer based on the MTEL.

Methods

This study is characterized as descriptive-exploratory¹⁸, of an applied nature, and with a cross-sectional design and the use of the qualitative approach to analyze in greater depth the experience, know-how, and subjective perception that the coaches had about the investigated phenomenon. In addition, the interpretative analysis adopted by the researcher seeks to construct meanings, values, and explanations from the researched content¹⁹.

Participants

Participants were intentionally selected based on their experience in soccer and level of intervention as coaches (1st division of Brazilian soccer or a corresponding level abroad and/or with national teams). Table 1 presents the data on the participants.

Table 1. Personal, educational, and professional characteristics of the coaches studied

	Age (years)	State of Birth	Athlete Experience (years)	Coach Experience (years)	Education Level	Activity Level
C1	56	SP	14	17	Higher Education	1st Division Brazil
C2	70	SP	18	33	Higher Education	1st Division Brazil and Europe/Asia
C3	43	RS	14	8	Higher Education	1st Division Brazil
C4	49	SC	19	11	High School	1st Division Brazil
C5	66	RJ	1	40	Higher Education	1st Division and World Cup

Note: SP = São Paulo; RS = Rio Grande do Sul; SC = Santa Catarina; RJ = Rio de Janeiro.

Source: authors

Procedures

A semi-structured interview was used in data collection adapted from the "*Guião de entrevista para treinadores*" (Interview Script for Coaches)²⁰, which contemplates the principles of the MTEL, elaborated by Gomes².

Before conducting the interview, the researcher clarified the confidential and anonymous nature of the data and information collected and made himself available to answer possible questions, in addition to collecting the signed Informed Consent Form (ICF). He then reiterated the objectives of the study and asked for permission to use his cell phone to record the interview in audio, as well as authorization to transcribe it. For the application and conduction of the interview, there was the need for the interviewer to have a basic mastery of the topic²⁰, in addition to following the recommendations of Sparkes et al.¹⁹, providing the freedom for the respondents to elaborate their answers.

Data analysis

The interviews with the five coaches lasted a total of five hours and 13 minutes, with an average of 62 minutes. The complete transcription of the five interviews was performed using Word 2010 software, totalizing 118 pages (font 12 and 1.5 spacing). In the transcripts, the words of the respondents were kept in full, and the grammatical semantic content was preserved. Nvivo software and thematic analysis²¹ were used in data analysis. Through six progressive steps (i – familiarization with the data; ii – generation of initial codes; iii – search for themes; iv – review of the themes; v – definition and naming of the themes; vi – production of the report), this method is considered a flexible and useful tool that allows the interpretation and analysis of complex data²¹ in-depth, as it allows the researcher to constantly resort to the data, generating themes and codes capable of identifying ideas, principles, values, and beliefs in the discourses of qualitative interviews²².

Aiming to obtain interpretative validity and provide greater data reliability, the procedures proposed by Shenton²³ were adopted to ensure more considerable reliability in qualitative research in four dimensions: credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. Thus, the engagement and familiarity of the research were facilitated by the fact that the first author was a high-performance soccer coach; however, the other authors of the work served as "critical friends" in the construction and validation of the data interpretation, thus reducing personal bias. The respondents validated the transcription and interpretation of their interviews. Moreover, the triangulation with the theoretical model allowed the assertiveness of the deductive interpretation and the construction of the themes. The project was approved by the *Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa com Seres Humanos* (CEPSH, Human

Research Ethics Committee) of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (CAAE 01716018.1.0000.0121) under opinion No. 3.013.820. The participation of the coaches was made possible by reading and signing the ICF.

Results

The evidence found in the study was systematized deductively from the MTEL (Figure 1), with the results contemplated in three categories: I) leadership philosophy, II) leadership practice, and III) leadership criteria of high-performance soccer coaches (Figure 1).

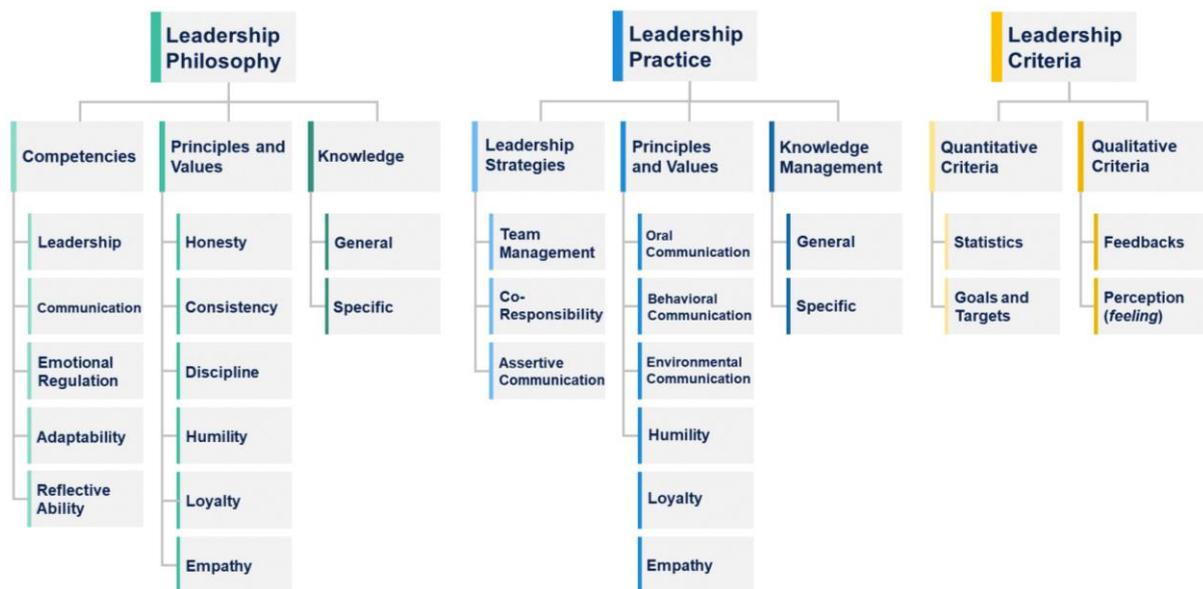


Figure 1. MTEL for high-performance Brazilian soccer coaches.

Source: the authors

The leadership philosophy of high-performance soccer coaches

Regarding the conceptions of leadership philosophy, the data collected made evident competencies (leadership, communication, emotional regulation, adaptability, and reflective capacity), principles/values (honesty, consistency, discipline, humility, loyalty, and empathy), and professional knowledge (general and specific) reported by the high-performance soccer coaches (Figure 1).

Among the skills mentioned by the coaches, *leadership and communication* stood out for their relevance in their conceptions of leadership. They claimed that *leadership* is fundamental to the qualification of the coach, enhances sports performance, and, if combined with *communication*, allows efficient team and staff management: "If you don't have leadership, you can't even try to be a coach because, if you don't have leadership, you lose the group right away, and forced or imposed leadership is of no use. Leadership is something you conquer" (C2).

Thus, *communication* ensures coaches the transmission of their ideas, principles, values, and beliefs of leadership, so that they must adapt the language and adjust it to the context of the listener to make themselves understood:

"The coach needs to know how to pass the content to establish a relationship of trust with the player; they have to

adjust their speech to the athletes, be simpler, more direct, more didactic, say what they want, give examples and simplify, not take more than fifteen minutes, and be transparent in their speech" (C4).

The studied coaches highlighted, as indicators of good *leadership* and *communication*, quality in people management, charisma, respect, admiration, and group cohesion. In addition, the coaches reported that *emotional regulation*, *adaptability*, and *reflective ability* are essential skills for survival and professional qualification in the high-performance context. "The coach is under pressure from all sides. Egos and vanities lead internal (athletes, staff, board) and external (press, fans, agents) environments to conflict, and emotionally regulated coaches must manage these conflicts and direct their teams" (C2). This pressure for results, combined with experience, prepares a coach to adapt quickly to different contexts to know how to react to ecological stimuli with better decision-making: "the Earth revolves around the sun and not the other way around. That is why a coach revolves around soccer and not the other way around. It is essential for a coach to have a good reading of the environment and adapt to it, creating answers to the different problems that are proposed" (C5). Thus, the *reflective ability*, in addition to contributing to the improvement of this decision-making, makes a coach qualify and survive the environment by evolving and contributing to the elevation of their professional performance:

"This reflective period of a coach may be compared to the rest period of a professional player. Just as players need rest for their bodies to reach new levels of performance, coaches need to reflect on their practical routines to improve their performance. If a player does not rest, their body reaches a limit and they may even reach overtraining, just like a coach who doesn't stop to reflect and reach a cognitive limit or even the automatic reproduction of what they have always done. They no longer evolve!" (C5).

The coaches reported that they base their leadership philosophy on principle and values such as *honesty*, *consistency*, *discipline*, *humility*, *loyalty*, and *empathy*. They believe, for example, that *honesty* and *consistency* directly influence leadership, management, and group cohesion: "a coach has to be very honest in their decisions with the group; they have to be open with the club. And, to be successful, you need a healthy locker room" (C2). The *consistency* in speeches generates respect but also wins the trust of the team:

"It's about consistency in the speeches. Consistency in their actions. Consistency in decision-making. Because if the players realize that you have double standards, you lose the confidence of the group. They may even disagree with your decisions, but if they are consistent, they will respect you" (C3).

Loyalty and *empathy* are also principles and values that are vital to developing interpersonal knowledge: "loyalty is very important. When the result does not show, it is at that moment that I really know who is with me. I have suffered a lot in soccer, so I think it is as

important as having a great professional by your side" (C1). The coaches believed that *empathy* ensures the charisma of a leader, which enhances confidence, security, and respect, leading the team to listen to the voice of the coach, ensuring the process of leadership and management of the group: "one of the coaches who most dominated the group made the players play for him. If he saw someone in the corner, sad, he would go there and be interested in the problem. If the club didn't solve it, he tried to do so" (C2). In turn, *humility* and *discipline* favor the evolution of the professional knowledge and performance of a coach:

"I think discipline is the main thing. Discipline is necessary in every field and it's essential for a productive work environment. It is essential so that you may qualify your work with planning, organization, and the assembly and management of your team. Your professional growth goes through much reading, attention, and focus, but the main thing is discipline" (C1).

Humility also fosters continuous learning and development: "if you do not have humility, you will not reach it, and it is like that with the great successful coaches, humility will lead you to go further" (C4).

The participants suggested that the leadership philosophy of a high-performance coach must consider two types of knowledge: general and specific. The first covers the information that concerns soccer, such as technology, foreign languages, culture, politics, didactics, geography, history, and other disciplines:

"You have to know what's going on in your country, in the world, politically. You have to know a little about physical preparation, physiology, psychology, management, laws, etc. Because, after all, you need to dialogue with all the professionals who are around you in the club and outside it" (C3).

Another coach commented: "Many do not master technology, and nowadays a coach must master it" (C4). In turn, the specific knowledge covers technical-tactical and methodological content, game reading, locker room management, and rules of the game, among others: "a coach has to understand about methodology, locker rooms in the intervals of matches, have a good game reading, know how to pass the knowledge of what they think" (C2).

The professional knowledge was highlighted by the respondents as a relevant condition for a coach to improve their practice and achieve success: "you must be restless in the search for information. A coach with knowledge motivates themselves and their team, and the more knowledge they have, the more chance of success they will have" (C5).

The leadership practice of high-performance soccer coaches

The data referring to the leadership practice of the coaches allowed identifying three categories of practices: leadership strategies (team management, co-responsibility, and assertive communication), the practice of principles and values (oral, behavioral, and environmental communication), and knowledge management (general and specific knowledge) (Figure 1).

The coaches indicated that team management is a leadership practice crucial to the success of a coach. They pointed out practices such as demanding (with consistency), managing egos and vanities, group cohesion, managing athletes not lined up and alternates, positively challenging (creating individual/collective targets and goals that inspire, motivate, and mobilize athletes), hidden leadership (leading the individual without them even realizing they are being led), understanding and caring (caring and worrying), instructing and giving relationship advice with the internal (colleagues, staff, and management) and external (social networks, agents, press) environments, adapting to the particularities of each team, and creating new facts when management is threatened. "In my management, you have to have discipline and demand; the coach always has to press, always demand more; you must always be challenging your group (C1). "The coach has to manage much more conflicts of those who do not play than those who are playing" (C3).

The data show that coaches usually share some responsibilities: "When the leader is too centralizing, in addition to becoming more overloaded, they gradually lose their team. This is because if people do not get their hands dirty, they do not feel part of the process and become discouraged" (C5). Therefore, they understand that delegating functions and actions, being more consultative (brainstorming), giving the team freedom to solve problems, passing more confidence and security, generating more autonomy in decision-making, creating committees (groups of athletes who assist in team management), and shared demanding (the committee helps to demand) largely support team management.

The respondents reported that having assertive communication is essential in team management: "You have to speak the language of the players; there is no point in using difficult words. You have to have good communication and influence others to follow you" (C2). It is important for coaches to customize/adjust their language, know those they lead to create a communication strategy, find the trigger of attention and focus of their listeners, and be succinct, objective, honest, and transparent in their communication: "The most important thing is for a coach to understand that they have to adapt their speech and communication strategy to each player; each human being has things that sound like music to their ears and make their eyes shine" (C5).

Regarding leadership practices, the evidence found allowed us to enumerate three categories that the studied coaches use in transmitting their principles and values: a) oral communication, b) behavioral communication, and c) environmental communication.

The coaches reported that oral communication should occur frequently, succinctly, objectively, and directly. It must be intentional, adapting the tone of voice to the context, being consistent, persuasive, and with good arguments so that the team absorbs your ideas. It occurs during the training session or through feedback in the locker room, during speeches or even through informal dialogues: "it is common for us to see players say in interviews what we, the coaches, said in the locker room. That is why you have to pass on your ideas little by little, but it has to be every day, and not like some people do, who talk for more than hours about the same thing and the players stop paying attention" (C5).

As its name suggests, *behavioral communication* is carried out by the personal example of the coach. The respondents reported that a coach transmits their principles and values through their behaviors, gestures, attitudes, examples, and the practice they proclaim: "You have to be principled, honest, and an example. There is no point in coming to the locker room and saying that we have to be a family if you are not an example of a family. You have to be an example and honest in the locker room" (C4).

The coaches understand that *environmental communication* occurs through the organizational culture and climate, in which the transmission of PVs occurs through

formal/informal norms and rules applied to the team, the historical social interactions with the staff, managers, and workgroup, as well as phrases, ideas, and thoughts disseminated daily by cultural agents or at different places in the work environment: "you have to be aware of everything, to what people and even the signage scattered on the walls of the club tell you. Because the club does not start when you arrive, it already has a history, and you have to know it to do a good job" (C2).

The analysis of the interviews conducted with the studied coaches allowed grouping the information on knowledge management into two categories: a) Practice of specific knowledge; b) Practice of general knowledge. It was classified as knowledge practice since the category aims to exemplify how coaches operationalize and put into action their general and specific knowledge.

The respondents reported that the most relevant *specific knowledge practices* include the reading/interpretation of the game in the pre-game talk and interval correction, decision-making in the few (three) substitutions during the match, training methodology/pedagogy to evolve the team, mastery of the competitions and athletes' market for hiring and forming the roster, as well as seeking knowledge with peers and recycling in courses and trips: "The coach needs to understand tactics, concepts of play, attack, and defense, and always be aware of the market and what people are talking about. They need to master these new technologies" (C4).

Regarding the *general knowledge practices*, the coaches highlighted the interdisciplinarity for management as a head coach, communication in other languages, diversity of national cultures, didactics, mastery of interpersonal relationships with the external and internal environments, and balance between professional and personal (family) life: "In soccer, you have to understand people, psychology, tactics, politics, rules, press, medicine, and so many areas that, if you only know soccer, you do not remain at the high level" (C5). "That is why the market for coaches today asks more for a generalist profile than a specialist" (C3).

The leadership criteria of high-performance soccer coaches

The data obtained on the topic of leadership criteria allowed the systematization of two categories: a) Quantitative Criteria; b) Qualitative Criteria. While the former refers to objective data that can be measured numerically, i.e., quantitatively, the latter refers to data obtained with more subjective criteria that value more the characteristics, particularities, and peculiarities of the data, or rather, quality over quantity.

Regarding quantitative data, coaches use *statistics* as the primary tool for evaluating their work. Among them, the most relevant criterion is the result (titles and victories), in addition to *scouts* of training sessions and matches that help those numbers. Another alternative mentioned is the use of individual and collective *goals and targets* such as reaching a given classification zone, being safe from relegation, putting as many boys from the base to play, or negotiations of athletes: "Unfortunately, in Brazil, a successful coach is evaluated by titles, by victories, by having achieved goals. They are evaluated for achieving the goal to which the club sets itself" (C2). "Sometimes a coach is judged for good work when they prevent the team's relegation. Many coaches are called to put out fires and are still good coaches" (C4).

The data also show that the studied coaches use qualitative criteria: a) feedback; b) perceptions (feeling). In the first, they said that to evaluate their work, they usually listen to the opinions of athletes, staff, managers, and the press: "the perception of each of them is important because players give you feedback on what they want or not, whether they agree or not, whether they buy your idea or not, communicated by speech or body expression" (C1).

In turn, the second concerns the personal perceptions that coaches seek to capture in the environment to judge their own work. They understand that reviewing videos of matches and

training sessions, feeling the locker room, and observing people's reactions in professional daily life are ways to analyze the quality of the work: "You don't have to have a number when you have this perception, and an experienced coach can perceive it more easily" (C2). "I typically watch and rewatch matches and training sessions. What is the use of many numbers on those sheets if I do not have the images" (C4).

Discussion

The evidence of the present study reveals that the coaches have declarative knowledge of their philosophies, practices, and leadership criteria yet express the three categories in a disconnected and non-linear manner. In addition, they do not present leadership criteria consistent with the reported leadership practices, which makes it difficult for a coach to perform a more qualified evaluation of the idea-action process^{3,6}.

Among the competencies mentioned by the coaches, leadership and communication stood out. They believe that such competencies are essential for good people and environment management. By using accessible, clear, objective, and authoritative language, athletes and staff are encouraged to "buy into the idea" of the coach, which enhances the team's sports performance and achievement of results. This perception corroborates the studies conducted with serial winning coaches^{5,24}, which state that the management of a winning coach is based on the transmission of their leadership philosophy (buy into the idea) sustained on the tripod of vision, environment, and people. That is, the coaching staff, athletes, managers, and other professionals (people) must follow the philosophy (vision) of the coach, building a healthy, challenging, balanced, and optimal development organizational culture and climate (environment) in order to achieve their goals. And to put this into practice, the respondents believe that coaches must know how to demand, persuade, have conviction, didactics, trust, respect, humility, honesty, consistency, empathy, and motivation to extract the best from their teams. According to Becker^{25,26}, the ability to operationalize such behaviors classifies a professional as a great coach.

Although some studies indicate the planning of training sessions, organization of tasks, and conduction of practices as important competencies for sports coaches²⁷⁻²⁹, it was possible to notice that there was not the same highlight in the data collected. It is believed that the context of increased instability, short-term projects (average of three months), constant changes of statutory directors, and saturated schedules¹⁰ may be the reasons for such dissonance relative to Brazilian high-performance soccer coaches. Perhaps, for this reason, the other competencies revealed by the respondents (emotional regulation, adaptability, and reflective capacity) are priorities to withstand/resist such an adverse scenario.

Although the results point to an unconscious distance between the philosophy and practice of leadership, it is possible to identify some relevant instinctual actions that come from the tacit knowledge of the coaches. Sporting success as a former athlete or experiences of achievements as an expert coach ensure the coach an authority that favors the achievement of the respect of athletes³. The practice of team management requires experience, sensitivity, authority, problem-solving, and constant decision-making. It was also possible to identify a considerable alignment of the practices mentioned by the respondents relative to the study by Becker²⁶, which reviewed more than three hundred articles on the impact of coach behaviors on athlete performance. The author systematized the actions into seven categories: a) positive behavior; b) support and backing; c) individualities; d) being fair and honest; e) appropriate behavior; f) clarity and transparency; g) being consistent.

Assertive communication ensures that the communicator's ideas reach the listener's understanding and assimilation. For this, it is essential that coaches develop a communication strategy based on their teams. The data suggest that coaches should know the goals and purposes of those they lead, elaborating feedback, dialogues, and customized language adjustments (what, how, when, and where to speak) to be assertive. In a study with a five-time consecutive national champion basketball coach, Vallée and Bloom³⁰ recommended that coaches avoid being verbose and that they be clear, direct, consistent, have accessible language, and practice what they preach (behavioral communication).

According to the data obtained, coaches transmit their principles, values, and beliefs through oral, behavioral, and environmental communication. To enhance the performance of the team, it is important that, in addition to being aware of their philosophy, coaches develop plans to disseminate their ideas not only through what they say but also by example and by directing the environment³. However, it is important to emphasize that, when elaborating their leadership philosophy, coaches must consider the organizational culture/climate, the characteristics of the leader (self-knowledge), and the characteristics of the team members⁴.

To better control the effectiveness of this transmission, elaborating leadership criteria becomes very important. Thus, evaluating the process more consciously, fairly, and adequately is possible, avoiding the simplistic and reductive view of evaluating work only through sports results. Instead of evaluating the training session-match only with the feeling, scouting, and result, as reported by the respondents, coaches may create success indicators of efficiency (qualitative) and effectiveness (quantitative) for their leadership, considering procedural details that allow a coach to discern between mistakes and successes, tackling problems and highlighting positive points, as opposed to rashly modifying everything just because of the final result^{3,4}.

Conclusions

It is concluded that the coaches manifested the mastery of procedural knowledge about their conceptions and principles of leadership. However, despite describing their actions and practices, it was possible to identify a disconnected relationship between leadership philosophy and practice. The lack of connection between what one thinks (philosophy) and what one does (practice) suggests, albeit involuntarily, the choice of the tripartite model of leadership (disconnected philosophy, practice, and criteria, nonlinear logic, and independent of each other). It is believed that such behaviors are spontaneous and guided by tacit knowledge, automatically reproduced by thoughtless behaviors, which presupposes justifying the incongruity and scarcity of leadership criteria found in the research.

It is recommended that high-performance soccer coaches in Brazil adopt the MTEL, in which philosophy, practice, and evaluation are interdependent. In other words, they are harmonics of linear logic, in which actions and criteria are based on the philosophy of leadership (its ideas). In this model, the coach's learning focuses on the reflection of deliberate practice, contemplating the process and the result, and based on the complexity of the relationship among the context, the leader, and the team members. Thus, it is believed that leadership will be more dynamic and adjusted to the conceptual and practical cycle, allowing the coach a reflective, conscious, and evolutionary activity so as to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. In this sense, adopting a clear philosophy of activity congruent with their effective practice is decisive for their effectiveness as leaders. It is suggested that coaches also gather objective evaluation criteria on their activity as well as the performance of their athletes (comprehensively and not

only through sports results) in the sense of feeding back their activity (practice) according to the principles (philosophy) to which they proposed themselves.

The application of systematized reflection is essential for the development of coaches. Indeed, deliberate practice, supported by a transversal reflective journey, enhances a coach's learning, making them aware of their experiences. These, assisted by a reflective dialectic, foster better decision-making and prevent constant thoughtless reproductive actions. Thus, discourses about stagnant tacit knowledge, repeated empirically and incidentally, are emancipated and transformed into a more developed and effective practice.

Given the limitations of the study, especially those associated with the use of interviews in data collection, it is recommended to continue the investigation to ascertain the practice of the coaches *in loco*, comparing what they say they do with what they actually do, as well as to identify the impacts of distinct leadership models (three-phase and tripartite) on soccer teams. In addition to monitoring the intervention of coaches for a prolonged period, it is recommended to use the procedures of triangulation of different sources of information.

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