

Investigation of Professional Readiness of Selected Male and Female Experts in Iranian Sports Organizations

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate professional readiness of a selected group of male and female experts in Iranian sports organizations. It is a descriptive study with an applied objective. The statistical population of the study includes the entire selected male and female experts (406 experts) of Iranian sports organizations among which 352 cases cooperated with the researchers and therefore were selected as research sample. Measurement tool is the professional readiness assessment standard questionnaire (Aliabadi, 2014); the validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been approved by sport experts. The descriptive and inferential statistics including KS- and T-test was used to analyze the data. The results indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female experts in sports organizations regarding mental readiness and its components (motivation, commitment, confidence); but there is a significant difference at 0.01 level between them with regard to work readiness and its components (skill, knowledge, experience). Moreover, based on the average of work/technical readiness components, male experts are better than female experts.

Keywords: Professional Readiness, Experts, Sport Organizations

Introduction

Contingency or situation based management theory, both in human resource management and organizational guidance and supervision, with respect to the ability and willingness to work and take appropriate styles of management and proper diagnosis of all the factors in the situation, has led us to conclude that there is no best management style in organizational situations, and that readiness level of managers and employees and other agents within and outside the organization are effective. Under the contingency leadership, there is no such thing as the best way to influence staff, and the leadership style chosen by the leader depends on employees' readiness (Hersey & Blanchard, 2005). Developing the necessary regulations to achieve organizational objectives and regulate appropriate management systems can only be effective when an organization's staffs are aware of these regulations and management systems, when they believe in them, and follow them appropriately. Employees' failure to comply with these laws and regulations leads to disturbance and consequently makes the organization move away from its goals. It is therefore necessary to deal effectively with those people whose behaviors are inconsistent with organization's objectives. The method to deal with these people should be designed and applied according to the organizational circumstances and the level of employees' "organizational maturity," or more precisely, "job readiness" (Hersey & Blanchard, 2004).

The first step to have an effective relationship between a leader and follower is for the leader to be aware of the level of staff's readiness and choose the effective leadership style based on this awareness. It is argued that the key to effective leadership is to know the readiness level of a person or a group we want to influence, and then we can select the appropriate leadership style based on this knowledge. If this is true, how can managers decide about the true meaning of readiness? A few comments should be made about the constituent components of readiness. First, according David McClelland's study (1953), success-oriented people have common characteristics, including the ability to set high but achievable goals, interest in personal success instead of success reward, and interest in task efficiency rather than attitude and self-efficiency. Among these characteristics, we are more interested in the ability to set high but achievable goals. Second, in terms of training and experience, we believe that there is no conceptual difference between the two. One can obtain task readiness either through training or experience. There is a difference between the two, because when we refer to education we mean formal classroom participation, but experience is obtained during work and by oneself (McClelland et al., 1953). Third, researchers have previously demonstrated that training and experience affect ability and motivation affects willingness. Accordingly, professional readiness means the way one gets ready for a specific task. Two main components of readiness include job readiness (ability) and mental readiness (willingness).

Components of technical/job readiness are knowledge, skill and experience. Mental readiness is the degree of confidence, commitment, and motivation to be successful in a particular task or activity (Hersey & Blanchard, 1996).

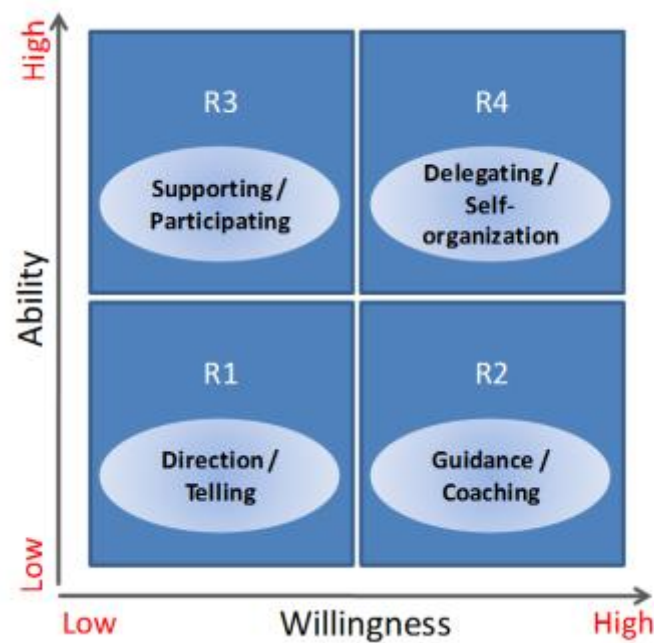


Figure 1. The level of professional readiness and its relationship with the leadership styles according to Hersey and Blanchard's views

Hewitt Bradley Lynn (1995), sees contingency management as the best management strategy for sport managers, and he has confirmed this view in his research results. Steven (2001) in his study about contingency management in sport managers concluded that the level of readiness has a positive effect on the relationship between the leader and follower, and that contingency management is effective on organizational health and management effectiveness. In organizations, it is managers who control production factors, lead the others, and pave the way for the efforts of human resources. Therefore, managers can motivate the staff by choosing an appropriate leadership style. One of the key factors in selecting leadership styles is to pay attention to staff's readiness. Appropriate behavior with the staff along with their level of readiness motivates them and this, in turn, leads to a greater effort from the part of human resources and makes the organization successful in achieving its goals (Hersey & Blanchard, 2005); this eventually will cause the progress and development of a country. Aghaii (2010), compared managers' and staff's readiness in physical education section of Iranian universities and its relationship to effective decision-making and concluded that there is no significant difference between managers' and staff's readiness, and that managers should generally avoid authoritarian or telling methods while performing tasks and achieving organizational goals. Wang and Hal (1991), stated that educational and work experience is related to task readiness, and that there is no significant relationship between job readiness and motivation to succeed. Hart (2008), has concluded that college education cannot predict job readiness and success. Ehsani (2008), found out that men have had more management and educational experiences than women, and that this has led to greater assessment of their knowledge than women, while women have higher education. In a study of 360 male and female managers in America's public welfare organizations, Cardano, Scherer, and Owen (2002) ,stated that these managers had equal ability and motivation, but male and female managers were evaluated in terms of future expectations and past performance, respectively.

Given the importance of staff's professional readiness and the right leadership style, the present study seeks to assess the professional readiness of the selected male and female experts in Iranian sports organizations.

Methodology

This analytic study has a descriptive method of data collection and an applied purpose. The statistical population of the study includes the entire selected male and female experts (406 experts) of Iranian sports organizations among which 352 cases cooperated with the researchers and therefore were selected as research sample. Measurement tool is the professional readiness assessment standard questionnaire (Aliabadi, 2014); the validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been approved by sport experts. The questionnaire includes 47 items on the 5-point Likert scale which evaluates the professional readiness of sport experts in Iranian sports organizations. Cronbach's alpha for the 6 components of professional readiness is presented in Table 1. The descriptive and inferential statistics including K-S test (to determine data normality), independent T-test, and Cronbach's alpha was used to analyze data; SPSS₂₂ was used to draw the diagrams.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha for the component of professional readiness

Component	Cronbach's Alpha
motivation	0.805
commitment	0.904
confidence	0.746
skills	0.868
knowledge	0.873
experience	0.794

Findings

The obtained results indicate that 38.6 percent of sports experts are female and 61.4 percent are male. Also, most experts belong to 31-40 age group, and 50-60 age group involves the least number of experts (Diagrams 1 & 2).

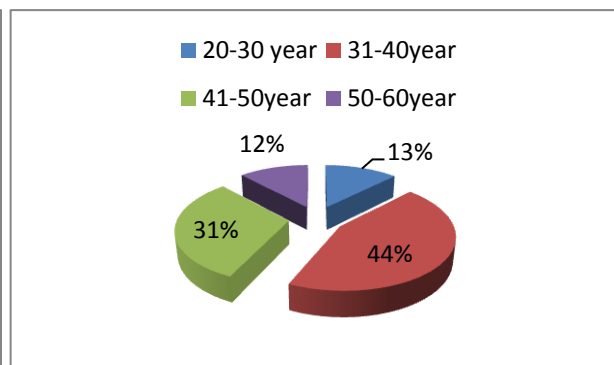
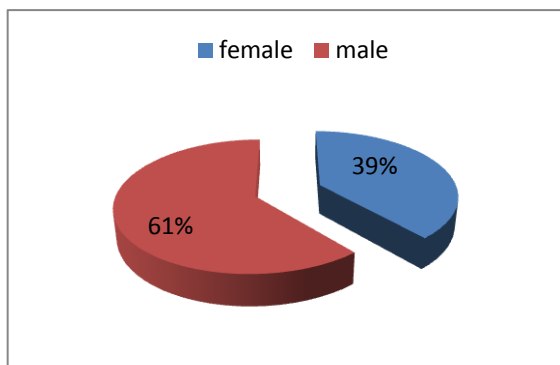


Diagram 1. Description of sport experts based on gender **Diagram 2.** Description of sport experts based on age.

The obtained results from K-S test for data normality were approved ($p \leq 0.05$) and researchers used parametric inferential statistics. The obtained results from the assessment of mean and standard deviation of professional readiness along with its different components are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of professional readiness components

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation	Female	136	3.96	.53
	Male	216	4.02	.45
Commitment	Female	136	4.00	.57
	Male	216	4.10	.62
Confidence	Female	136	3.90	.64
	Male	216	3.96	.43
Skills	Female	136	3.87	.68
	Male	216	4.05	.48
Knowledge	Female	136	3.96	.61
	Male	216	4.13	.51
Experience	Female	136	3.37	.85
	Male	216	3.61	.67
Mental readiness	Female	136	11.87	1.51
	Male	216	12.09	1.28
Work readiness	Female	136	11.21	1.89
	Male	216	11.80	1.37

As observed in Table 2, the average of mental readiness components (commitment, confidence, motivation) is above 3 and hence the mental readiness of male and female experts is higher than 11 which is a good average. Also, the average of work readiness components (knowledge, skills, experience) is higher than 3 and therefore work readiness of male and female experts is above 11 which is a high and desirable average.

Table3. T-test between professional readiness components in female and male staff

professional readiness components	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
motivation	-1.159	350	.247
commitment	-1.460	350	.145
confidence	-1.050	350	.294
skills	-2.894	350	.004**
knowledge	-2.791	350	.006**
experience	-2.882	350	.004**
Mental readiness	-1.455	350	.146
Work readiness	-3.362	350	.001**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As seen in Table 3, there is no significant difference between male and female experts in sports organizations regarding mental readiness and its components (motivation, commitment, confidence); but there is a significant difference at 0.01 level between work readiness ($t = -3.362$, $p = 0.001$) and its components including skills ($t = -2.894$, $p = 0.004$), knowledge ($t = -2.791$, $p = 0.006$) and experience ($t = -2.882$, $p = 0.004$). Based on the average of work/technical readiness components, male experts are better than female experts.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study illustrated that the experts in Iranian sports organizations have a suitable degree of professional readiness which is above the average level. Developed countries give witness to the fact that human resources are one of the most important factors in the development of countries (Mirghafouri, 2006). In Iran, sports organizations are the sources which spread health and vitality among the population. So, these organizations and their staff are especially important. Paying attention to and proper treatment of human resources will promote an organization and improve its effectiveness. According to the results, it seems that sports managers should use delegating and guidance styles of leadership instead of supporting and telling ones. This result is quite consistent with those obtained by Aghaii (2010), Steven (2001), and Bradley Lynn (1995). In addition, the results of inferential analysis of the data showed that there is no significant difference between male and female experts regarding motivation, commitment, and confidence, but the average women's scores for these three components is lower than those of men. The results for lack of a significant difference in the motivation of male and female experts are consistent with those obtained by Cardano, Scherer, and Owen (2002). The results also indicated that there is a significant difference between male and female experts regarding work readiness and its components. Male experts have better knowledge, skills, and experience than female experts. At the organizational level, there are also some stereotypical beliefs about women that can act as a mental barrier, for example: It is sometimes said that when the work gets difficult, women do not bear it; women do not have a broad perspective and are not suitable for teamwork; being a mother and wife and having family responsibilities, women usually give the second priority to their jobs; therefore, women always avoid ambitiousness in their jobs, they do not take risks, and they avoid trying to make change; so it seems obvious that they have less skills, knowledge, and experience in carrying out their work, as compared to men. On the other hand, men have had more management and educational experiences than women, and this has led to greater assessment of their knowledge compared to women. These results are consistent with those obtained by Ehsani (2008).

According to the obtained results, we can illustrate that mental readiness and work readiness together constitute professional readiness, and an increase in one component can affect the others, it is recommended: Senior managers should enable experts to continue their graduate studies in order to increase the level of their knowledge, especially for female experts. It is also recommended that they hold workshops to improve experts' skills in sports organizations so that they can do better in their jobs. Moreover, it is suggested that managers should encourage female experts to further improve and upgrade their skills.

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