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Abstract: *The research was aimed at studying the relationship between management approaches and the efficiency of sports organizations. To achieve this goal, a theoretical analysis of leadership styles and aspects of strategic management was conducted, as well as a survey of sports managers. The study of various leadership models, including transformational, situational, servant leadership, democratic and authoritarian, showed that transformational and situational leadership are the best approaches to improving team performance and motivating participants. The study of strategic management has confirmed its significance as an important multicomponent tool for ensuring stability and achieving long-term goals, especially when integrated with appropriate leadership approaches. According to the survey of sports managers, transformational leadership received the highest scores in combination with strategy implementation and risk management, while the authoritarian style received the lowest scores in combination with environmental analysis, adaptive planning, human resource management, and others. The findings indicate that leadership styles that promote flexibility, creativity and effective communication create favourable conditions for the sustainable development of teams, support their adaptability and increase the level of involvement of participants, which ultimately has a positive impact on the overall management efficiency of sports organizations.*
Keywords: *transformational style; adaptability; effective communication; teamwork; organizational goals*

Introduction

Sports management is increasingly facing challenges that require the adaptation and implementation of effective management practices to ensure the successful functioning of sports organizations. As leadership and strategic management are important components that determine the ability of organizations to achieve high performance, overcome challenges and sustain sustainable development, the challenge is that different leadership approaches have significantly different impacts on the performance of sports teams and their management outcomes. Given the changing environment, including the development of digital technologies, increased competition and economic crises, there is a need to better understand which leadership styles are most effective for sports organizations of different sizes. In order to optimize management approaches in sports organizations, further increase their competitiveness and overall efficiency, it is necessary to focus on adapting leadership practices to specific conditions of activity. The choice of an appropriate leadership style and effective strategic planning not only affect the success of the team in competitions, but also determine the sustainability of the organization in a changing sports market.

Previous studies in the field of strategic management and innovation in sports organizations have highlighted the factors that contribute to their effectiveness. Adiguzel (2020) investigated the role of strategic management in combination with innovation processes and concluded that technological capabilities serve as a catalyst for improving innovation processes and increasing the effectiveness of strategy execution. In addition, Rehman et al. (2019) investigated the impact of leadership styles on organizational performance through the development of an innovative culture and organizational learning. They found that the combination of transformational leadership with a culture of innovation and learning is crucial for increasing productivity. At the same time, there is still a lack of comprehensive research that would reveal the interaction of these factors in large sports organizations.

Methodological approaches need to be improved to increase the accuracy and reliability of research in the field of sport management. Andrew et al. (2020) proposed a systematic approach to research in this area and drew attention to the need to develop detailed guidelines for formulating questions and collecting data. The authors have developed

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a framework that allows researchers to effectively plan their studies, choose adequate data collection methods, and apply scientific approaches to analyse the results. However, qualitative methods also play a key role in sports research: Skinner et al. (2020) found that the use of qualitative methods allows for more nuanced data on relationships within sport organizations, the relationship between coaches and athletes, and the motivations and expectations of different participants in sport. Kim and Lee (2019) confirmed that an incomplete understanding of statistical methods often leads to methodological errors and distortion of results. Thus, despite significant advances in methodology, there is still a need for clearer standards and the integration of better approaches to avoid inaccuracies and increase the scientific validity of results.

Modern research on the role of sport in society has demonstrated the diversity of views and approaches that reflect different aspects of its significance. For example, Gammelsæter (2021) emphasized the danger of commercialization of sport, which undermines its authentic values and focus on personal and social development, turning sport into a business. The author pointed out the importance of returning to the cultural and social role of sport, which includes fair play and community engagement. A different view was offered by Yoon et al. (2024). They argue that leadership in sport can stimulate not only sporting but also entrepreneurial activity, promoting responsibility and commitment in a team context. In this case, sport acts as an environment for developing innovative thinking and professional skills. The study by McCullough et al. (2020) expanded on this approach by emphasizing the environmental responsibility of sport and its potential to impact a sustainable environment, which requires the integration of environmental practices into sport management. The reviewed works pointed to the need for further research into a balanced approach that would preserve the values of sport while developing new areas of its influence.

Studies on leadership approaches in sports teams have shown a significant impact of such approaches on the interaction and level of involvement of participants. For example, the work of Garcia et al. (2021) demonstrated that programmes that promote the development of authentic leadership in coaches can significantly increase athletes' motivation and create more trusting relationships within the team. The authors confirmed the role of authentic leadership in creating a positive environment where athletes feel supported and, accordingly, demonstrate a higher level of satisfaction with training. The study by Ehnold et al. (2021) complemented these findings and confirmed the importance of digital technologies for the organizational capacity of sports clubs. It was found that the introduction of digital tools improves communication and member engagement, particularly in clubs with high organizational capacity, which allows for more effective management. Despite these achievements, it remains to be seen how the integration of digital solutions can further strengthen leadership initiatives.

The reviewed studies have demonstrated significant progress in the study of the field of sports management, but the question of how different leadership approaches can be combined with modern management approaches remains unexplored. The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of leadership styles and strategic management on the overall performance of a sports organization. The objectives of the study were to identify the most common leadership models in sports organizations, assess the effectiveness of strategic management practices and the role of strategic planning in achieving organizational goals, and conduct a survey of sports managers.

Materials and Methods

The article analyses leadership models and strategic management in sports organizations. The current trends in leadership in sports were considered, the most common leadership models and their impact on the performance of teams and individual athletes were identified. A detailed description of each leadership model was provided, and how these models shape the culture of sports organizations, affect the relationships between participants and the final results were considered. Each leadership style was also assessed, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the specific conditions under which a particular model is most effective. To assess the impact of each leadership style on various aspects of team dynamics and individual performance, a comparison of leadership models was conducted.

The analysis of strategic management in sports structures assessed the effectiveness of strategic management practices and the role of strategic planning in achieving organizational goals. The analysis covered such aspects as external environment analysis, strategy formulation and implementation, performance monitoring, adaptive and long-term planning, risk and human resource management. In addition, special attention was paid to the ability of sports organizations to adapt to rapid changes in the external environment and apply innovative practices to ensure sustainable development.

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The study involved 385 respondents, sports managers at top, middle and grassroots levels. The age range was from 25 to 55 years old (average age 43.6 years); 274 men (71.2%) and 111 women (28.8%). The sample was drawn randomly from sports managers working in the following sports organizations: football (12%), hockey (5%), basketball (9%) and rugby (3%) clubs, athletics (21%) and cycling (4%) organizations, gymnastics (11%) and swimming (8%) schools. For the purpose of in-depth analysis, 10% (39 people) of the total number of respondents were randomly selected to participate in semi-structured interviews.

The survey was conducted online using Google Forms. Respondents were provided with a memo defining key concepts in the context of leadership styles and aspects of strategic management to ensure a uniform understanding of the questions and uniformity of results. All participants were asked the following questions (Table 1).

Table 1. Example of questions from a survey conducted

No.	Questions	Answer options
1.	Do you think that adapting leadership style to the situation contributes to the effectiveness of an organization?	a. Absolutely yes b. Rather yes c. Neutral d. Rather no e. Not at all
2.	To what extent do you think that current trends in the sports industry (e.g., the introduction of technology, changes in training approaches) influence your leadership style?	a. Influence significantly b. Influence moderately c. Have little or no impact d. Do not affect at all
3.	How often do you think training and leadership strategies should be reviewed to improve team performance?	a. Monthly b. Every three months c. Every six months d. Annually e. As needed
4.	Assess your level of satisfaction with the current approaches to leadership in your organization.	a. Very satisfied b. Satisfied c. Neutral d. Dissatisfied e. Very dissatisfied
5.	How often do you review your management strategies to improve organizational performance?	a. Monthly b. Every three months c. Every six months d. Annually e. As needed
6.	How important is it to adapt the leadership style to the individual needs of the athlete?	a. Critically important b. Very important c. Important d. Not very important e. Not important at all

Source: compiled by the authors.

Additionally, respondents were asked to evaluate the combination of leadership styles and aspects of strategic management using a 10-point scale. For this purpose, they were provided with blank tables in which they had to evaluate each combination, which allowed obtaining quantitative data for further analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 39 respondents (12 women, 27 men, average age 45.8 years). The interviews were conducted in the format of video conferences via Zoom and lasted 15-30 minutes (Table 2).

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Table 2. *Questions that were asked during the interview*

No.	Questions
1.	How did your leadership style affect the effectiveness of the sports organization you work for?
2.	Can you give an example of when strategic planning and leadership contributed to the achievement of important organizational goals? What specific approaches have been most successful?
3.	How is your leadership influenced by trends in the sports industry, such as the increase in technology or changes in approaches to athlete training?
4.	How do leadership approaches affect resource management in your organization? Are there any styles that are more favourable for the optimal use of resources?
5.	What specific managerial decisions have you made to improve the effectiveness of your organization, and how does this relate to your leadership approach?
6.	What strategies have you found to be most effective in maintaining high levels of athlete motivation in the long term?

Source: compiled by the authors.

The ratings of the combination of leadership styles and strategic management aspects were used to create a heat map that displayed the mean values and deviations, which made it possible to identify the best and worst combinations of leadership approaches and strategic management aspects, as well as the consistency of experts' opinions. The obtained scores were processed in an Excel spreadsheet using standard formulas to calculate mean values and standard deviations. The interview materials were processed by transcribing the audio recordings.

All respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the format of participation, and the possibility of refusing to participate. To ensure confidentiality, all data was collected and processed anonymously, and no identifying information was collected.

RESULTS

Analysis of current trends in leadership in sports: identification of the most common leadership models in sports organizations and the impact of leadership approaches on the performance of teams and individual athletes

Leadership in sports organizations is not just a management tool, but a foundation for building an effective team and achieving high results. Each leadership model has a unique impact on athlete development, team cohesion and performance. It is important to understand the different approaches and recognize how they shape the organization's culture, relationships between participants and the final results. Among the leadership models that dominate in sports structures, scholars identify transformational, transactional, situational, servant leadership, charismatic, democratic and authoritarian leadership (Mach et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2022; Şahin, 2022). It is worth considering the impact of each of these approaches on team and individual athlete performance.

Transformational leadership is one of the most powerful models in the sports context as a leader, who chooses this approach is able not only to manage the team, but also to inspire it to achieve results that at first glance seemed impossible (Newland et al., 2019). Leaders who act on the basis of a transformational approach can create a shared vision of the future that becomes a driving force for each athlete. They support athletes in overcoming difficulties and encourage them to go beyond the usual. This approach helps to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual support in which athletes feel part of a larger whole; it contributes to increased motivation, personal development and, as a result, the achievement of outstanding results at both the individual and team levels.

Transactional leadership, in contrast to transformational leadership, is more formalized and focused on a system of rewards and punishments. Athletes clearly understand what is expected of them and what the consequences of their actions will be. This model provides predictability and stability, which can be very effective, especially in preparation for competitions where clear rules and standards must be followed. At the same time, the transactional approach often limits creativity and initiative, as athletes may focus solely on completing tasks without trying to find new ways to achieve results or improve.

Situational leadership is especially important in sports, where the dynamics of the situation change instantly, and the coach or leader has the ability to adapt his or her leadership style to suit the circumstances. For example, in one situation, a leader may choose a supportive approach to help athletes develop confidence in their abilities, while

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in another they may adopt a more directive style when they need to make quick decisions under pressure. The situational approach allows for effective response to the needs of the team and individual athletes, maintaining a balance between control and autonomy that leads to better results.

Servant leadership is a unique approach that helps to highlight the importance of caring for the needs of athletes as a leader's top priority (Lemoine et al., 2019). A servant leader creates an environment where athletes can grow both professionally and personally. He or she focuses on achieving athletic performance and developing moral character and emotional resilience. This support helps to create a team in which each member feels important and relationships within the group are based on trust and mutual respect. Such support helps to reduce stress, increase motivation and the overall level of satisfaction of athletes from participating in the team.

Charismatic leadership has a significant impact on athletes' performance due to the energy and inspiration that the leader exudes. A charismatic leader is able to rally a team around a big idea or goal, inspiring each athlete to believe in their own abilities. Under his influence, athletes often show high commitment and motivation, and are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of a common goal. However, this style can also have a downside – a team's strong dependence on the leader can lead to a loss of direction in the event of his or her absence or replacement, which can sometimes undermine stability and long-term effectiveness.

Democratic leadership involves the active involvement of athletes in decision-making, which increases their engagement and sense of responsibility for team success. A leader who follows a democratic approach encourages discussion, considers the opinions of all team members and builds open communication. This model of leadership contributes to the development of leadership skills in the athletes themselves, their personal growth, and the strengthening of team spirit. However, this style may be less effective in situations where quick and decisive decisions need to be made.

Despite its criticisms, authoritarian leadership also has its place in sport organizations, especially in high-stress environments or in times of crisis. An authoritative leader clearly indicates what needs to be done and how to do it, which can be useful when a quick response is needed. Athletes know what is required of them, and this helps them to focus on the goal at hand. However, a long-term authoritarian approach can lead to a decrease in motivation and initiative, as athletes feel that they are merely executors without the ability to influence the team's processes.

Each leadership model has its own unique characteristics and impact on team and individual performance, and the effectiveness of a sports team largely depends on the leader's ability to choose a specific style and flexibly adapt it to the circumstances, taking into account the characteristics of the team, the specifics of the sport and the current situation. It is believed that effective leaders combine different approaches, which helps to maximize the potential of athletes to ensure high sports results and sustainable development of the team (Day et al., 2020; Daniëls et al., 2019).

Strategic management in sports structures: evaluation of the effectiveness of strategic management practices and the role of strategic planning in achieving organizational goals

Strategic management in sports structures is a critical element of the success of modern sports organizations, as it determines how successfully the organization achieves its goals, uses resources and adapts to the dynamic external environment. It is known that assessing the effectiveness of strategic management practices can help identify the strengths and weaknesses of management, as well as determine how best to innovate and ensure development in a constantly competitive environment (Dodgson, 2021; Agazu and Kero, 2024; López and Oliver, 2023). In the sports sector, where changes occur very quickly, strategic management becomes the basis for stability, allowing organizations to maintain efficiency while maintaining flexibility to adapt to new conditions.

The main strategic management practices used in sports organizations include analysing the external environment, formulating a strategy, implementing it and monitoring the results. An important part of these processes is the ability of a sports organization to respond quickly to market changes, introduce innovations and effectively manage human resources. The effectiveness of management practices is determined by the extent to which an organization is able to achieve its goals while minimizing costs and making optimal use of available resources. For example, the analysis of the external environment should include consideration of the competitive landscape, economic factors, legislative changes and social trends, which can help a sports organization to be prepared for different development scenarios and make decisions based on real data.

The role of strategic planning in sports organizations cannot be overestimated, as it provides a basis for decision-making, allows for the development of long-term development programmes and clearly defines the organization's

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activities. Successful strategic planning involves a clear vision of the future, an understanding of the organization's strengths and weaknesses, and consideration of opportunities and threats in the external environment, which allows sports organizations to achieve high results in competitions and ensure financial stability and long-term competitiveness. It is important to note that strategic planning also helps to avoid chaotic actions and establish a systematic approach to solving problems and achieving goals.

Another important feature of strategic planning in sport is its adaptability. Sports organizations often face unforeseen circumstances, such as player injuries, changes in competition regulations or economic crises. Therefore, effective strategic planning must be flexible enough to take these factors into account and adapt to new conditions. Adaptive planning allows avoiding the negative effects of crises and using them as opportunities for development by revising athletes' training strategies or optimizing the use of resources. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many sports organizations were forced to revise their training strategies, focusing on individual training and the introduction of online classes (Washif et al., 2022; Purc-Stephenson et al., 2022; Washif et al., 2024). Such adaptability helped not only to keep athletes in shape, but also to develop new approaches to the training process that remained useful after the crisis period.

Another important aspect is the integration of strategic planning with human resource management. In sports organizations, people are the main asset on which the success of the entire structure depends, so effective strategic human resource management should include the selection, development, and motivation of coaches, players and administrative staff. Only a harmonious combination of human resources and strategic goals can ensure the stable development and success of a sports organization. For example, recruiting qualified coaches who share the organization's values and are willing to work towards long-term goals is an important component of building an effective team. It is also essential to consider the motivation of athletes: strategic planning should include measures to increase motivation, such as creating individual development programmes, providing social support and implementing a reward system.

The effectiveness of strategic management in sports organizations also depends on the ability of leaders to anticipate changes and develop strategies that take into account long-term trends. For example, the development of technology and analytics in sports has provided new opportunities for collecting and analysing data on the effectiveness of training, the health of athletes, and their performance during competitions. The use of such data in strategic planning can allow for more accurate prioritization, identification of risks and informed decision-making. Sports organizations that actively implement analytical approaches can gain a significant advantage over their competitors, as they are able to respond to changes more quickly and increase the efficiency of the training process.

Strategic management in sports organizations plays a crucial role in achieving organizational goals; effective management practices and strategic planning provide the basis for the development, growth, and sustainability of sports organizations in the face of dynamic change and high competition. It is believed that the key success factors are the ability to adapt to new conditions, use resources efficiently and integrate strategies with human resource management (Zhang et al., 2023; Chelladurai and Kim, 2023; Bradbury et al., 2021). Only those sports organizations that consider long-term trends and innovations are able to ensure sustainable development and long-term success in the field of sport.

Synergy of leadership and strategic management: impact on the efficiency of sports organizations and expert opinions

The analysis of the respondents' answers to open-ended questions allowed us to better understand the specifics of the challenges and the effectiveness of applying different leadership styles when working with high-level teams in the sports industry.

Regarding the impact of leadership style on organizational performance, most experts indicated that their approach to leadership directly determined the level of team motivation and commitment of athletes to common goals. One of the experts emphasized the importance of working with each player individually and paying attention to their personal needs, which helped to keep motivation high even in times of difficulty. This approach demonstrated the importance of personalized work with players, especially in sports with a high emotional component.

Other experts drew attention to the synergistic effect of combining strategic planning and leadership. One respondent cited an example where clear planning and the ability to inspire the team led to the successful achievement

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of long-term goals, while another manager confirmed that strategic planning that took into account the individual needs of athletes and constant motivation from the leader were key factors in achieving a positive result. This approach demonstrated the importance of combining clear strategic direction with active support and engagement of stakeholders, which proves success not only through planning, but also through creating a culture of accountability and involvement of each participant in a common goal.

Changes in the sports industry, such as the introduction of new technologies, have a significant impact on the leadership approaches used in organizations. Respondents noted that the development of analytical systems and the latest methods of training athletes is forcing leaders to reconsider their management styles. With the advent of new technologies, the approach to working with the team has changed. Leaders have become more open and integrated players into the decision-making process, which has contributed to increased teamwork and trust between players and management.

Regarding the impact of leadership on resource management, most experts agreed that democratic and collective management styles contributed to the optimal use of resources. The involvement of trainers in decision-making allowed for better cost control and more efficient use of resources, which also pointed to the effectiveness of teamwork in addressing resource allocation issues, especially in the context of limited funding.

When analysing management decisions, experts emphasized the benefits of adaptive leadership for improving organizational performance. Leaders who are able to adapt to changes and make unconventional decisions can ensure the stability of organizations even in crisis conditions. Regarding the motivation of athletes, most experts emphasized the importance of an individual approach and creating conditions for continuous professional development. A comprehensive approach, including the physical and mental development of athletes, was seen as crucial for maintaining their motivation in the long term.

The results of the interviews showed that the effectiveness of a sports organization largely depended on the leader's ability to adapt to modern challenges, use an individual approach to working with the team, and actively involve stakeholders in strategic decision-making. This approach allowed the organization to achieve high results and ensure stable development in a rapidly changing sports industry.

When asked about adapting the leadership style to the situation, most respondents demonstrated some scepticism about whether it contributes to the organization's effectiveness (Figure 1).
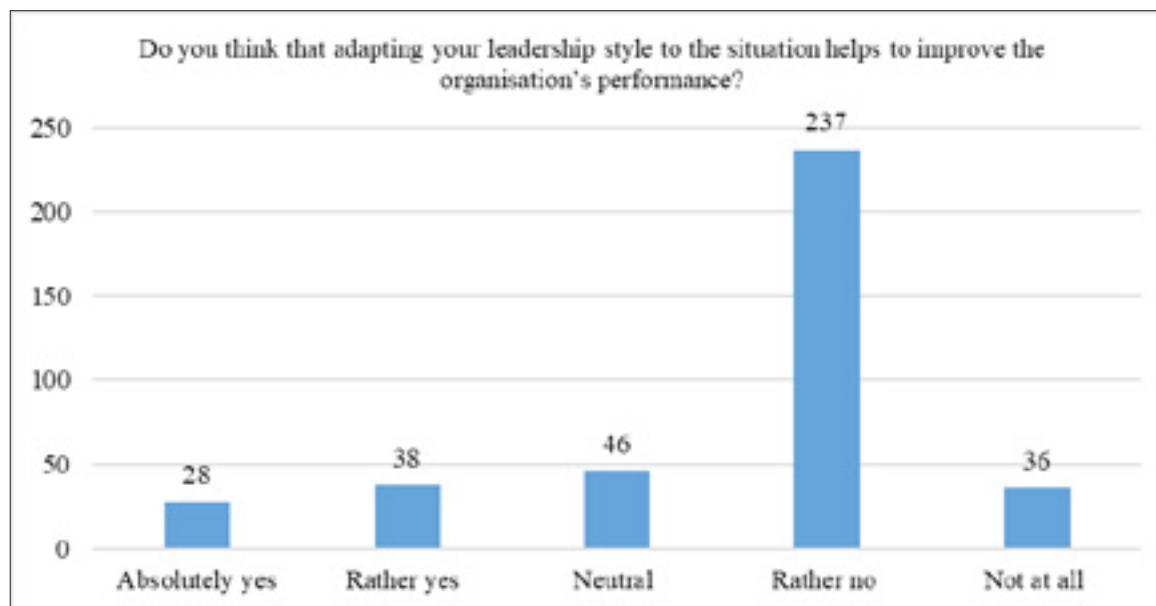
Figure 1. Distribution of experts' answers to the question about the impact of adapting leadership style depending on the situation on increasing the organization's efficiency

About 70.9% of respondents were against adaptation, which may indicate a sense of stability and reliability in existing approaches. The high level of distrust of flexible leadership styles is likely to be explained by previous

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experiences where changes could lead to instability and lack of clear results. In addition, respondents may have seen fixed approaches as providing a certain structure that helps to avoid confusion and reduces the likelihood of mistakes in difficult circumstances.

In terms of the impact of current trends in the sports industry, only 21.3% of respondents said that they have a significant impact on their leadership style, while the majority either did not note a significant impact or denied it at all (Figure 2).
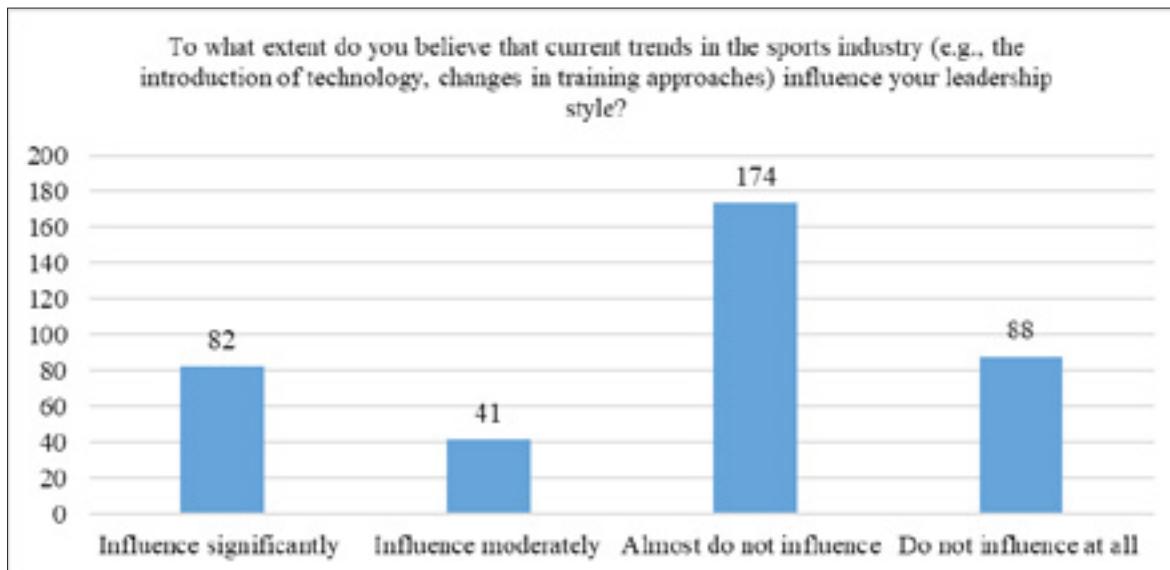

Figure 2. Distribution of experts' answers to the question about the impact of modern trends in the sports industry on leadership style

This situation may indicate that a significant number of leaders are likely to face challenges in implementing new technologies or simply consider them ineffective in the context of their own management approaches. Another critical aspect is that the impact of modern technologies is often perceived as an additional factor rather than the main means of improving results, which indicates that traditional management methods are still in place.

In terms of the frequency of reviewing training and leadership strategies, the most popular idea was to review them every three months, which was supported by the majority of respondents (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Distribution of experts' answers to the question about the need to review the training and leadership strategy to improve team performance

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67.5% of respondents supported the idea of reviewing training and leadership strategies every three months or more frequently, indicating a desire to maintain a balance between stability and adaptation. Leaders understand the need for regular change to optimize processes, but at the same time are reluctant to make changes too infrequently to avoid over-adaptation. The idea of reviewing strategies on a semi-annual basis received the least support, which may be due to the need to maintain a more flexible approach to change, as well as the desire to maintain clarity and focus on strategic goals without becoming too inert.

In terms of satisfaction with the existing leadership approaches, the majority of respondents expressed a neutral position (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Distribution of experts' answers to the question about the level of satisfaction with the existing approaches to leadership in the organization

The neutrality in this question may be an indicator that the existing approaches, while not having significant drawbacks, do not provide exceptional results that would contribute to a high level of satisfaction. The high proportion of neutral responses indicates that there is room for improvement, as respondents did not express strong support or opposition to current methods. This may be due to a lack of innovative changes or insufficient involvement of staff in the decision-making process.

In terms of the frequency of reviewing management strategies, the most frequent response was every six months (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Distribution of experts' answers to the question about the frequency of reviewing management strategies to improve the organization's efficiency

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With 60.5% of respondents indicating that they review their management strategies every six months, this may indicate that leaders want to maintain a certain rhythm in the process of planning and implementing change. At the same time, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that they review their strategies every three months (19%), which indicates an interest in flexibility in management and the ability to respond quickly to change. Revising the strategy depending on the situation was the least popular option (5.2%), which may indicate the need for a defined framework and timeline to ensure control and stability.

When asked about the importance of adapting the leadership style to the individual needs of the athlete, the responses were rather mixed (Figure 6).
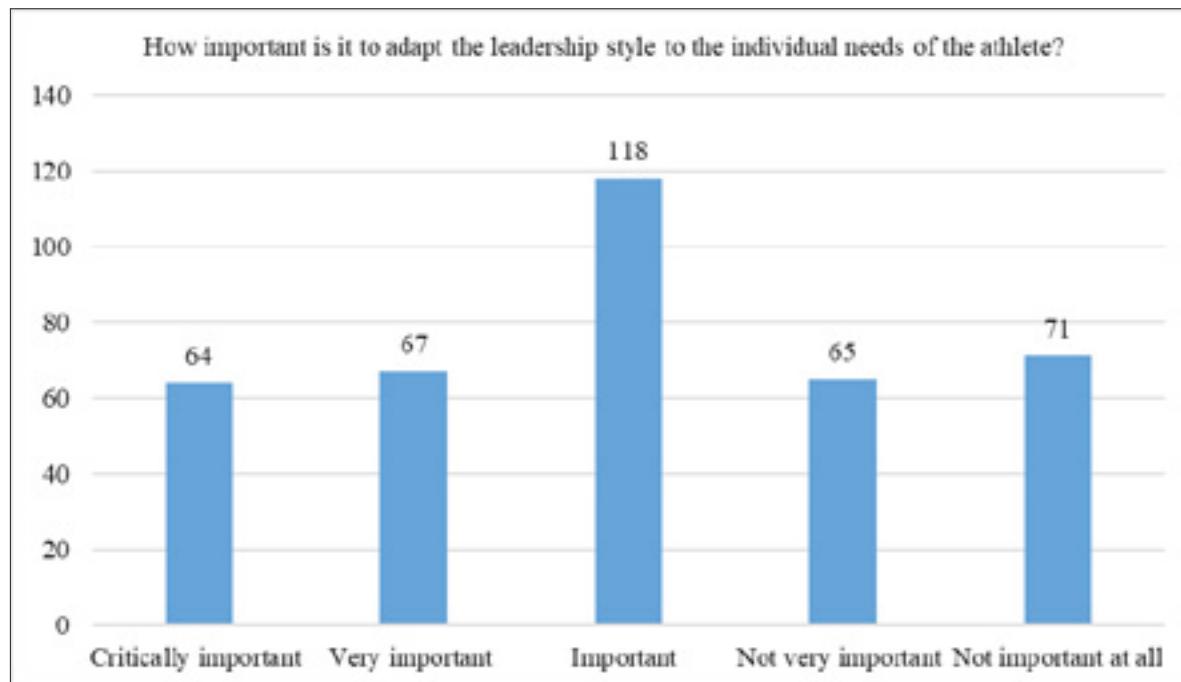

Figure 6. *Distribution of experts' answers to the question about the importance of adapting the leadership style depending on the individual needs of the athlete*

Although a significant proportion considered it critical (16.6%) or very important (17.4%), around 35% of respondents were against such adaptation, indicating that there are fundamental differences in management approaches, with some leaders focusing on individual development and others believing that one-size-fits-all management methods can be more effective in a teamwork context. The results also indicate some barriers to understanding or accepting the need for a personalized approach, possibly due to the complexity of its implementation or lack of appropriate resources.

The heat map of average scores and deviations of the combination of leadership styles and strategic management aspects was created based on the responses of 385 respondents and made it possible to see which combinations of leadership styles and strategic management aspects were considered the best and which were considered the worst. It also visualized the consistency of experts' opinions, which made it possible to identify pairs of leadership styles and aspects of strategic management where experts' views coincided and vice versa. Table 3 provides a holistic picture of the perception of different management approaches and the best strategies for the development of organizations.

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Table 3. *Heat map of average scores and deviations of the combination of leadership styles and aspects of strategic management*

Leadership style/ Strategic management aspect	Analysing external environment		Strategy formulation		Strategy implementation		Monitoring results		Adaptive planning		Long-term planning		Risk management		Human Resources Management	
	μ	SD	μ	SD	μ	SD	μ	SD	μ	SD	μ	SD	μ	SD	μ	SD
Charismatic leadership	7.5	1.8	7	1.7	6.8	2	7.2	1.9	7	1.7	6.2	2.1	8.1	1.5	7.5	1.8
Transformational leadership	8.3	1.6	8	1.5	8.5	1.3	8.1	1.6	8.3	1.6	7.4	1.9	8.5	1.4	8.2	1.5
Transactional leadership	6.1	2.3	6.5	2.1	7.2	2	6.8	2.2	6.1	2.3	7.8	1.7	7.2	2	6.9	2.1
Situational leadership	8	1.5	7.8	1.4	8.4	1.6	8	1.5	8	1.5	7	1.8	8.4	1.6	7.8	1.7
Servant Leadership	7.9	1.7	7.5	1.8	8	1.9	7.7	1.6	7.9	1.7	6.8	2	8	1.9	8.1	1.6
Democratic leadership	7.4	1.9	7.2	1.7	7.9	1.8	7.5	1.7	7.4	1.9	7.3	1.6	7.9	1.8	7.6	1.8
Authoritarian leadership	5.6	2.5	6	2.3	7	2.1	6.4	2.4	5.6	2.3	6.9	2.2	7	2.1	6.3	2.3

Note: μ – average; SD – standard deviation.

Transformational leadership demonstrated the highest average scores in such critical aspects of strategic management as strategy implementation (8.5) and risk management (8.5), indicating a high ability of this style to implement changes and adapt in difficult conditions. At the same time, the deviations for these indicators remained relatively low (1.3 and 1.4), which indicates the stability of the assessments and the consistency of respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of transformational leadership in these aspects. This stability indicates that transformational leadership has clear and understandable advantages in environments where adaptability and rapid implementation of strategies are required.

Charismatic leadership, on the other hand, showed significant deviations in aspects such as strategy implementation (2.0) and long-term planning (2.1). That is, although this leadership style can have a strong impact on athletes, its effectiveness depends heavily on the specific situation and individual characteristics of the leader. The high deviations indicated that leadership outcomes can be unpredictable, making this style less reliable in the long run, especially when it comes to a systematic approach to planning.

Situational leadership also scored highly in aspects such as strategy implementation (8.4) and risk management (8.4), with moderate deviations (1.6). Experts agreed on the ability of managers with this style to effectively adapt to different conditions and make decisions. It is important to note that situational leadership was recognized as one of the most versatile approaches, as it allows leaders to change their style depending on the specific situation, which ensures relative stability of results.

Authoritarian leadership, on the other hand, scored the lowest in most aspects, including analysing the external environment (5.6) and adaptive planning (5.6). These results indicated a limited ability of this style to adapt and respond flexibly to changes in the external environment. The high deviations (2.5 and 2.3) showed that respondents had an ambivalent attitude towards the authoritarian approach in the context of analysis and adaptation, which makes it less effective in today's environment where rapid change and flexibility are required.

With regard to servant leadership, it showed strong results in human resource management (8.1), which highlighted the effectiveness of this style in working with a team, particularly in creating a supportive atmosphere and engaging people. Servant leadership is particularly useful when it is important to ensure a high level of athlete engagement and motivation, making it effective in the context of managing people.

It is also important to note that long-term planning was the aspect that had the highest deviations for almost all leadership styles. This suggests that long-term strategies required more coherence and predictability, which could not always be achieved with certain leadership styles. In particular, the lowest deviation for democratic leadership (1.6)

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in this aspect indicated that a collective approach to decision-making may be most effective in long-term planning, as consensus building can provide a more stable basis for long-term goals.

In summary, the analysis demonstrated that transformational and situational leadership were most effective in many aspects of strategic management, especially when it came to strategy implementation and risk management. The authoritarian style, on the contrary, was the least effective, especially in conditions that required flexibility and adaptation, and servant leadership was the best in the context of human resource management.

Discussion

The study revealed the impact of different leadership approaches on the effectiveness of sports organizations. The advantages and disadvantages of the main leadership styles were examined, and their impact on motivation, team cohesion and the implementation of strategic goals was assessed. The results of a survey of sports team managers have shown that transformational and situational approaches to leadership were the most effective, as they provided flexibility and adaptability in various management situations.

The analysis of the shortcomings of leadership styles in sports organizations showed that, despite certain strengths, most models had weaknesses that affect the effectiveness of teamwork. In particular, the authoritarian style was rated the worst by experts due to its low effectiveness in the long term due to excessive control that limited the motivation, creativity, and initiative of athletes. Although democratic and transformational styles have a positive impact on motivation and team cohesion, they may not be effective in certain situations. In general, the effectiveness of each approach depends on the leader's ability to adapt to the needs of the team and the specifics of the situation, which is a key factor in ensuring positive results. therefore, the effectiveness of each approach depends on the leader's ability to flexibly adapt the style to the needs of the team and the specifics of the situation. These issues had parallels with the study by O'Shannassy (2021), who focused on the challenges of implementing strategic leadership. In particular, the study noted difficulties in overcoming resistance to change and problems with establishing effective communication between leaders and subordinates. That is, not only in sports teams, but also in a broader organizational context, strategic leadership may face difficulties in building long-term trust relationships. In addition, the study by Fransen et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of collective identity formation and psychological safety, which were identified as key factors in the development of effective teamwork. Psychological safety created the conditions for open communication and contributed to the formation of a cohesive team where each member could express their ideas without fear of judgement.

The survey, which included questionnaires and interviews with managers of sports organizations, showed that there is a significant difference in the perception of different leadership styles, especially in the context of their impact on staff motivation and engagement. The questionnaire and interviews showed that transformational leadership significantly contributed to increasing the motivation and performance of managers, while the autocratic approach was criticized for limiting autonomy and reducing employee engagement. The inclusive style, as the results showed, was effective in creating an atmosphere of trust, which had a positive impact on the psychological climate in the organization. Thus, the interviews and questionnaires made it possible to determine that the most favourable for the development of a sports organization are approaches that take into account the individual needs and motivation of managers, which can be correlated with the findings of Oh et al. (2023), and Atrizka and Pratama (2022). In their work, J. Oh et al. found that inclusive leadership contributed to increased employee satisfaction, especially in conditions of high levels of trust in the organization, while autocratic leadership had a negative impact on engagement. In turn, the study by Atrizka and Pratama revealed the role of supportive leaders in the development of athletes' resilience. Since they create a favourable atmosphere for development and actively support their wards, this can significantly increase the ability of athletes to overcome challenges and stay motivated even in difficult situations. Similar conclusions were drawn from the interviews, in which some respondents noted that personal attention and support from leaders helped to overcome difficulties and keep employees motivated, indicating the need to move away from solely directive management styles and towards models that support collective identity and individual development.

The data obtained from the theoretical review, survey and heat map revealed significant shortcomings of the autocratic leadership style in sports organizations. It was found that the autocratic approach to management limited the initiative and autonomy of athletes, created a tense atmosphere that did not promote constructive cooperation and the development of innovative solutions. The results of the survey among managers showed that the autocratic style was

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heavily criticized by employees due to the limited ability to influence decision-making processes, which negatively affected their motivation and commitment. The heat map also showed the lowest scores for the autocratic leadership style in the areas of adaptive planning and environmental analysis, which confirmed its limited ability to adapt and lack of flexibility. The respondents also noted that autocratic management often led to a deterioration in the psychological climate in the team and a decrease in the level of involvement of participants in management processes. The study by Fransen et al. (2020), and Park and J.-H. Seo (2019) confirmed the need to move from an autocratic style to a more inclusive and distributed approach to managing sports teams. The study by Fransen et al. demonstrated that the distribution of leadership functions among team members contributed to improved coach-athlete relationships, increased motivation and overall team cohesion, while autocratic management often had the opposite effects. Park and Seo noted that transformational, democratic, and situational leadership approaches can provide a high level of motivation and adaptability, and the big data analysis revealed clear correlations between leadership styles and team success, indicating the need to abandon the autocratic approach in favour of more flexible and adaptive management models that take into account the needs and motivations of participants.

The formation of a heat map allowed us to identify the most and least effective combinations of leadership styles and aspects of strategic management in sports organizations. Transformational leadership was identified as the most effective in such aspects as strategy implementation and risk management, which was confirmed by high average scores and low deviations. These results demonstrated the stability and consistency in assessments of the effectiveness of this style, especially in environments where adaptability and the ability to implement change are required. Situational leadership also scored well in aspects such as risk management and strategy implementation, demonstrating the versatility of the approach and the ability to respond effectively to different situations. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership received the lowest scores, especially in the areas of environmental analysis and adaptive planning, indicating its limited ability to adapt and respond to change. The findings of the study by Barnhill et al. (2021) confirmed the importance of effective management of people and groups to improve the performance of sports organizations. The authors noted that the success of organizations depends on the ability of leaders to take into account the individual needs, motivations, and characteristics of employees, which confirms the validity of the heat map, where transformational and situational leadership received high marks.

The study by Lussier and Kimball (2024) focused on the development of applied skills in the field of sports management, including leadership, strategic planning, human resources and marketing. The results of the study showed that the development of these skills can significantly increase the efficiency of sports organizations. Managers who possessed these skills were better able to adapt to a changing environment, lead teams more effectively and make informed decisions, which contributed to the competitiveness of sports organizations. Comparison with this study has pointed to the importance of developing strategic management skills regardless of the chosen management style, as these skills allow for effective adaptation to change and ensure stable results.

The authors of the reviewed papers agreed that each leadership style in sports organizations has its own strengths and weaknesses that significantly affect the team's performance. The autocratic style has been most criticized for its ability to limit the motivation, initiative, and creativity of athletes, which negatively affects long-term results. Transformational and democratic leadership have been found to be effective in increasing team motivation, but they also have drawbacks in certain contexts. The studies underlined that the most important factor in leadership effectiveness is the ability of leaders to adapt their approaches depending on the specifics of the situation and the needs of the team.

Conclusions

The study examined various aspects of leadership and strategic management in sports organizations and their impact on the performance of teams and individual athletes. The theoretical analysis included a review of the following leadership models: transformational, transactional, situational, charismatic, authoritarian, democratic and servant leadership. It was found that each of the approaches has its own unique advantages and disadvantages, and their impact varies depending on the specifics of the situation and the goals of the organization. The review of the role of strategic management in sport organizations demonstrated its role in achieving organizational goals through the implementation of effective management practices and strategic planning. Strategic planning can help to set clear goals and develop appropriate strategies to achieve them, contributing to short-term efficiency as well as long-term development. Thanks to the flexibility of strategic management, sports organizations are able to respond quickly to

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external challenges while maintaining the clarity of management decisions.

The survey of experts revealed trends in approaches to managing sports teams. 61.6% of respondents were negative about the advisability of adapting the leadership style depending on the situation. This result can be explained by the desire for stability and avoidance of chaos that can result from excessive flexibility. In addition, only 21.3% of respondents acknowledged the impact of current trends in the sports industry on their leadership style. This suggests that most leaders have either not yet adapted to the changes or do not consider them critical to success. Managers rely on traditional management methods, which indicates a certain inertia in the adoption of innovations and limited potential for development, especially in the context of the rapid introduction of new technologies in the sports environment.

The level of satisfaction with the existing leadership approaches was mostly neutral, indicating that there is room for improvement, as the existing approaches provide neither significant advantages nor significant disadvantages. At the same time, the frequency of reviewing management strategies to improve organizational performance was most often six months, but a significant proportion of respondents noted the need for more frequent reviews depending on the situation, which indicates the importance of flexibility and the ability to respond quickly to changes. Adapting the leadership style to the individual needs of the athletes was recognized as important for achieving high results, but about 35% of respondents expressed doubts about the feasibility of this approach.

Transformational leadership and adaptive planning were named as the most effective combination, indicating a high level of coherence between the motivational approach and flexibility in strategies. The worst combination was that of authoritarian leadership and rigid, inflexible strategies, which is likely to limit opportunities for development and lead to low performance. The most controversial was the combination of democratic leadership and long-term planning, with experts divided in their assessments, as some saw potential for sustainable development, while others believed that this approach could make decision-making more difficult at critical moments.

A limitation of this study was the possible bias in the respondents' assessment of the effectiveness of leadership approaches. Further research is recommended to focus on the impact of specific characteristics of teams and individual athletes on the success of different leadership styles. This will allow for a deeper understanding of the relationship between team dynamics and management effectiveness, as well as the development of recommendations for optimizing leadership strategies in sports organizations.

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