

Contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among sports sciences and health professionals

Abstract

The contemporary sports sector has experienced substantial organizational and administrative transformation driven by governance reforms, institutional modernization, digital transformation, and the increasing professionalization of sports organizations. These developments have emphasized the importance of preparing sports sciences and health professionals with stronger awareness and understanding of sports leadership, decision making, and administrative processes capable of supporting organizational sustainability and institutional effectiveness. Accordingly, the present study aimed to examine the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs.

The study adopted a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed electronically to a sample of 158 first-year male and female students enrolled in a Sports Sciences and Physical Activity program at a Saudi university. The questionnaire consisted of three dimensions: sports leadership, decision making, and sports administrative awareness. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were employed to analyze the data.

The findings revealed relatively high positive perceptions across all study dimensions. Sports leadership obtained the highest mean score (Mean = 4.18), followed by sports administrative awareness (Mean = 4.12) and decision making (Mean = 4.09). The reliability analysis demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.907 to 0.926. Furthermore, the results indicated statistically significant positive relationships between sports leadership, decision making, and sports administrative awareness. The regression analysis also demonstrated that perceptions regarding sports leadership and decision making significantly contributed to predicting sports administrative awareness, with sports leadership emerging as the strongest predictor.

The study highlights the strategic importance of integrating leadership development, administrative awareness enhancement, and decision-making training into sports sciences and physical activity programs to support the professional preparation of sports sciences and health professionals. The findings also support the growing emphasis on human capital development, governance modernization, and institutional effectiveness within the Saudi sports sector in alignment with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

Keywords: sports leadership, decision making, sports administrative awareness, physical activity, health, sports management

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Introduction

The global sports industry has undergone substantial transformation in recent years due to rapid technological advancement, commercialization, governance reforms, and increasing institutional professionalism. Sports organizations are no longer limited to recreational functions; instead, they have become multidimensional institutions that require strategic leadership, administrative efficiency, and effective decision-making processes to ensure organizational sustainability and competitiveness. Consequently, leadership and decision making have emerged as fundamental pillars in modern sports management systems.^{1,2}

Sports leadership plays a significant role in directing organizational behavior, motivating individuals, improving institutional communication, and enhancing administrative effectiveness. Effective sports leaders contribute to creating collaborative environments that support organizational innovation and strategic development.

Contemporary leadership theories also emphasize that leadership effectiveness positively influences organizational culture, employee engagement, and institutional performance outcomes.^{3,4}

In educational sports environments, sports leadership is increasingly recognized as an essential component of preparing sports sciences and health professionals. University students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs are expected to develop perceptions and awareness regarding sports leadership, administrative practices, and decision-making processes aligned with the evolving requirements of sport, physical activity, and health-related professional environments. The growing emphasis on physical activity awareness and practice among healthcare professions students further highlights the importance of preparing future professionals to respond to evolving physical activity and health-related demands.⁵ Accordingly, higher education institutions have become responsible for developing students' organizational understanding and administrative readiness through academic and practical experiences.⁶⁻¹⁰

Decision making represents another critical managerial function within sports organizations and educational institutions. Effective administrative decisions contribute to improving organizational efficiency, solving institutional problems, optimizing resource allocation, and enhancing operational performance. In sports contexts, decision making often requires analytical thinking, communication skills, situational awareness, and organizational understanding due to the dynamic and competitive nature of sports environments.^{11,12}

Recent literature has highlighted the growing importance of evidence-based decision making within sports organizations. Modern sports institutions increasingly rely on analytical processes, organizational data, and strategic planning to improve administrative effectiveness and institutional governance. Therefore, developing decision-making skills among sports students has become essential for preparing future administrative leaders capable of adapting to organizational challenges and professional sports environments.^{13,14}

Sports administrative awareness refers to an individual's understanding of administrative principles, organizational structures, leadership responsibilities, communication systems, planning processes, and governance practices within sports institutions. Administrative awareness contributes to improving organizational participation, institutional adaptability, and professional readiness among future sports practitioners. Students with higher administrative awareness are more capable of understanding organizational dynamics and contributing effectively to sports institutions and management processes.^{15,16}

In Saudi Arabia, the sports sector has witnessed unprecedented transformation aligned with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, particularly through initiatives related to sports participation, governance development, institutional modernization, and quality of life enhancement. The Saudi sports industry has increasingly focused on developing qualified human capital capable of supporting the expansion and sustainability of sports organizations and administrative systems. Consequently, leadership preparation and administrative competency development have become strategic priorities within sports sciences and physical activity programs that prepare future professionals for sport, physical activity, and health-related settings.^{17,4}

Despite the increasing importance of sports leadership and decision making, previous studies have frequently examined these variables independently. Limited research has explored the combined contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among university students, particularly within Saudi higher education contexts. Additionally, the growing transformation of the Saudi sports sector requires further research examining how leadership and administrative competencies contribute to preparing sports sciences and health professionals capable of supporting organizational development and governance reforms.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to examine the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs. The study also attempts to provide empirical evidence regarding the relationships among these variables within the context of higher sports education and contemporary sports organizational development.

Literature Review

Sports leadership

Sports leadership has become one of the most influential factors affecting organizational effectiveness, institutional sustainability,

and administrative performance within modern sports organizations. Contemporary sports institutions require leaders capable of managing organizational change, improving communication systems, motivating employees, and achieving strategic objectives in highly competitive environments. As a result, leadership in sports settings has evolved beyond traditional administrative supervision toward transformational, participative, and strategic leadership approaches.^{2,3}

Transformational leadership has received significant attention in sports management literature due to its positive influence on organizational culture, employee motivation, and institutional innovation. Transformational leaders encourage collaboration, inspire organizational commitment, and support institutional adaptability during periods of organizational change. Studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influences employee engagement, organizational trust, and administrative effectiveness within sports organizations.^{1,4}

Sports leadership also contributes substantially to educational environments by enhancing students' perceptions of leadership readiness, communication competencies, and organizational understanding. Educational institutions increasingly recognize the importance of integrating leadership development into sports sciences and physical activity programs to prepare sports sciences and health professionals for contemporary professional environments. Leadership experiences within academic settings can improve students' confidence, teamwork abilities, and administrative awareness.¹⁸

Recent studies have further emphasized the relationship between sports leadership and institutional sustainability within sports organizations. Effective leaders contribute to organizational resilience, governance improvement, strategic alignment, and institutional accountability. Consequently, leadership development is considered an essential component in supporting long-term organizational effectiveness and human capital development within the sports sector.^{13,14}

Decision-making in sports management

Decision-making is widely recognized as one of the most critical managerial functions within sports organizations and administrative systems. Administrative decisions influence organizational performance, strategic planning, financial management, communication processes, and institutional sustainability. Effective decision-making requires analytical capabilities, organizational awareness, leadership skills, and evidence-based thinking to ensure successful institutional outcomes.^{11,19}

The increasing complexity of modern sports organizations has intensified the importance of strategic and evidence-based decision-making processes. Sports administrators are frequently required to evaluate alternatives, manage uncertainty, allocate resources, and respond to rapidly changing organizational environments. Therefore, the ability to make effective administrative decisions has become an essential competency for future professionals working across sport, physical activity, and related health settings.^{12,2}

Contemporary sports management literature highlights the importance of data-driven decision-making in improving organizational governance and institutional performance. Decision-making processes supported by organizational data, strategic planning, and analytical evaluation contribute significantly to administrative efficiency and operational effectiveness. In educational contexts, developing students' decision-making abilities can enhance their administrative understanding and professional readiness for future roles within sport and physical activity environments.¹³

Research has also demonstrated that decision-making positively influences organizational adaptability and problem-solving capabilities. Students capable of evaluating alternatives, analyzing organizational situations, and selecting appropriate administrative strategies are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of administrative awareness and organizational understanding.^{10,15}

Sports administrative awareness

Sports administrative awareness refers to an individual's understanding of organizational structures, administrative responsibilities, governance systems, communication mechanisms, leadership roles, and planning processes within sports institutions. Administrative awareness is increasingly recognized as an essential competency for students preparing for future professional roles across sport, physical activity, and related organizational settings.^{6,16}

Administrative awareness contributes significantly to organizational participation, institutional communication, and leadership effectiveness. Students with higher administrative awareness are more capable of understanding organizational responsibilities, adapting to institutional environments, and contributing effectively to administrative processes. Administrative awareness also enhances individuals' ability to engage in teamwork, leadership activities, and organizational problem-solving.^{2,10}

Recent literature has emphasized the growing importance of administrative awareness within higher sports education due to the rapid expansion and professionalization of the global sports sector. Sport, physical activity, and health-related environments increasingly require qualified graduates possessing organizational understanding, leadership readiness, and administrative competencies aligned with contemporary governance systems and institutional development strategies.^{4,20}

Within the Saudi context, sports administrative awareness has become particularly important due to the substantial transformation of the Saudi sports sector under Saudi Vision 2030. The expansion of sports governance systems, institutional restructuring, privatization initiatives, and quality-of-life programs has increased the demand for qualified human capital capable of supporting organizational modernization and sports sector sustainability.^{17,20}

Relationship between sports leadership, decision-making and administrative awareness

Previous studies suggest that sports leadership and decision-making abilities are closely associated with administrative understanding and organizational awareness. Effective sports leadership contributes to improving communication systems, organizational culture, teamwork, and institutional participation, all of which support the development of administrative awareness among individuals within sports environments.^{1,3}

Similarly, effective decision-making processes contribute to enhancing analytical thinking, organizational adaptability, and administrative understanding. Students capable of evaluating organizational situations and making informed decisions are more likely to demonstrate stronger awareness regarding administrative structures, governance systems, and institutional responsibilities.^{11,13}

Despite the growing body of literature addressing leadership and decision-making within sports organizations, limited studies have examined their combined contribution to enhancing sports administrative awareness among university students in higher sports education contexts. Furthermore, limited empirical evidence

exists regarding these relationships within Saudi sports education environments, despite the ongoing transformation of the Saudi sports sector and the increasing need to prepare sports sciences and health professionals with appropriate leadership, decision-making, and administrative competencies.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining the contribution of sports leadership and decision-making to enhancing sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs.

Research problem

The contemporary sports sector increasingly requires qualified individuals capable of demonstrating leadership abilities, administrative awareness, and effective decision making. Modern sports organizations operate within highly dynamic environments characterized by organizational transformation, governance reforms, institutional competition, and strategic development. Consequently, sports institutions require future professionals who possess strong administrative understanding and leadership readiness capable of supporting organizational sustainability and institutional effectiveness.^{1,2}

Higher education institutions play a central role in preparing students for future administrative and leadership responsibilities across sport, physical activity, and health-related professional settings. Sports sciences and physical activity programs are expected to develop students' organizational understanding, sports leadership, and administrative decision-making capabilities in alignment with the evolving demands of these professional environments. However, despite the importance of these competencies, concerns remain regarding the extent to which sports leadership and decision making contribute to sports administrative awareness among university students.^{6,10}

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of leadership development and evidence-based decision making within sports organizations. Effective leadership has been associated with improved organizational culture, institutional performance, communication systems, and administrative effectiveness. Similarly, decision making has been linked to organizational adaptability, strategic planning, and institutional sustainability. Nevertheless, many previous studies have focused on leadership or decision making separately rather than examining their combined contribution to sports administrative awareness.^{4,13}

Within the Saudi context, the sports sector has witnessed unprecedented transformation aligned with Saudi Vision 2030, particularly through initiatives related to sports governance, privatization, institutional modernization, and quality-of-life enhancement. These transformations have significantly increased the need for qualified professionals capable of contributing to sport, physical activity, and health-related environments while supporting administrative development and organizational effectiveness.¹⁷

Despite the rapid development of the Saudi sports sector, limited empirical research has examined the relationship between sports leadership, decision making, and sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs. Furthermore, limited evidence exists regarding how leadership and decision making contribute to developing administrative awareness and professional preparation within these educational environments.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to investigate the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs. The study also attempts to provide empirical evidence supporting the importance of leadership development and administrative competency enhancement in preparing sports sciences and health professionals.

Research objectives

The present study aims to examine the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. To examine students' perceptions of sports leadership, decision making, and sports administrative awareness.
2. To investigate the relationships between sports leadership, decision making, and sports administrative awareness.
3. To determine the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to predicting sports administrative awareness.

Research hypotheses

Based on the study objectives and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Sports leadership is positively and significantly associated with sports administrative awareness.

H2: Decision making is positively and significantly associated with sports administrative awareness.

H3: Sports leadership and decision making significantly contribute to predicting sports administrative awareness.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the present study is based on examining the contribution of sports leadership and decision-making as independent variables associated with sports administrative awareness as the dependent variable.

Independent variables

Sports leadership

Decision-making

Dependent variable

Sports Administrative Awareness

The framework assumes that sports leadership and decision-making are positively associated with students' understanding of administrative concepts, organizational structures, governance principles, and management practices within sports institutions.

The framework is supported by leadership theory, organizational behavior perspectives, and sports governance literature emphasizing the importance of leadership and administrative competencies in enhancing institutional effectiveness and organizational understanding.^{2,3}

Methodology

Research design

The present study adopted a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs. The descriptive-correlational approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to examine relationships among variables and identify the predictive contribution of independent variables to dependent variables within educational and organizational contexts.^{21,22}

Quantitative research designs are widely used in sports management and educational studies due to their ability to provide statistical evidence regarding organizational behaviors, sports leadership, and administrative processes. Furthermore, correlational approaches contribute to understanding the nature and strength of relationships among study variables and provide empirical evidence supporting predictive analyses.^{22,23}

Participants

The study sample consisted of 158 male and female first-year students enrolled in the Sports Sciences and Physical Activity program at a Saudi university. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling approach due to accessibility and the suitability of the target population for the study objectives.

The demographic characteristics of the participants included both male and female first-year university students within sports education environments. This population was considered appropriate because students at this academic stage are preparing for future professional roles across sport, physical activity, and health-related settings while developing foundational understanding of sports administration, leadership, and organizational processes.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed to measure the following dimensions:

- Sports Leadership
- Decision-Making
- Sports Administrative Awareness

The questionnaire consisted of 18 items distributed equally across the three dimensions, with six items assigned to each dimension. For the purposes of correlation and regression analyses, Sports Leadership and Decision Making were specified as the two predictor variables, while Sports Administrative Awareness was specified as the criterion (dependent) variable. Each variable was represented by the mean score of its corresponding six questionnaire items. Higher scores indicated higher levels of the respective construct. The instrument utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

The questionnaire items were designed based on contemporary sports management literature, leadership theories, organizational behavior concepts, and administrative awareness frameworks relevant to sports environments.^{2,3}

Reliability

The instrument demonstrated high levels of internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each study dimension to evaluate the consistency of questionnaire responses.

The reliability analysis revealed excellent internal consistency across all dimensions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Cronbach's alpha coefficients for study dimensions

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Sports Leadership	6	0.914
Decision-Making	6	0.907
Sports Administrative Awareness	6	0.926

The obtained Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating excellent reliability and strong internal consistency for all dimensions of the instrument.^{23,22}

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among the study variables and the predictive contributions of sports leadership and decision-making to sports administrative awareness.

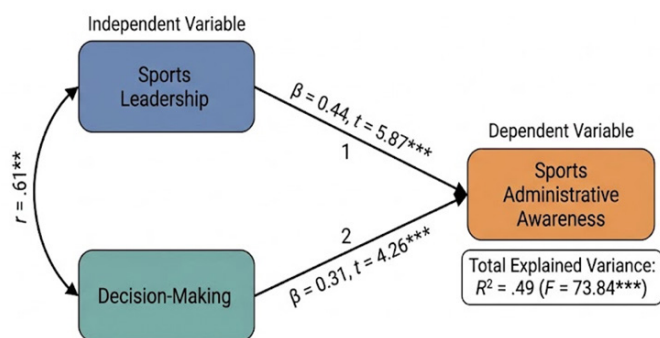


Figure 1 Conceptual path model of sports leadership and decision making paths predicting sports administrative awareness.

Data collection procedures

The questionnaire was distributed electronically to participants through online survey procedures. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses prior to data collection.

All responses were collected anonymously, and no personally identifiable information was obtained from participants. The study adhered to ethical research principles related to voluntary participation, confidentiality, and responsible data handling consistent with contemporary academic research standards (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Statistical analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical procedures. The following statistical analyses were performed:

1. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to determine the levels of the study variables.
2. Cronbach's alpha coefficients to assess the internal consistency reliability of the research instrument.

3. Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationships among sports leadership, decision-making, and sports administrative awareness.

4. Multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive contribution of sports leadership and decision-making to sports administrative awareness.

Statistical significance was established at $p < .05$ for all analyses.

Results

Descriptive statistics

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, sports leadership recorded the highest mean (4.18), followed by sports administrative awareness (4.12) and decision-making (4.09).

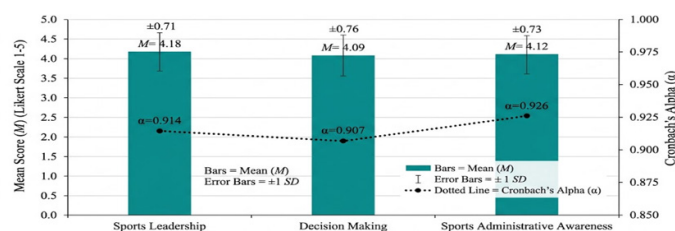


Figure 2 Descriptive distribution and internal consistency levels of study variables.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of study variables

Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
Sports Leadership	4.18	0.71	High
Decision-Making	4.09	0.76	High
Sports Administrative Awareness	4.12	0.73	High

The findings revealed relatively high positive perceptions across all study dimensions. Sports leadership obtained the highest mean score (Mean = 4.18), followed by sports administrative awareness (Mean = 4.12) and decision-making (Mean = 4.09). Participants reported relatively positive perceptions regarding sports leadership, decision-making, and administrative awareness within sports education environments.

Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the study variables.

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 3, sports leadership ($r = .67$, $p < .01$) and decision-making ($r = .59$, $p < .01$) were positively associated with sports administrative awareness. These correlation coefficients indicate that sports leadership had a stronger positive bivariate relationship with sports administrative awareness than decision making. The correlation coefficients (r) represent the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables and do not indicate their independent predictive effects.

Table 3 Pearson correlation matrix

Variables	1	2	3
1. Sports Leadership	—		
2. Decision-Making	.61**	—	
3. Sports Administrative Awareness	.67**	.59**	—

Note. $p < .01$

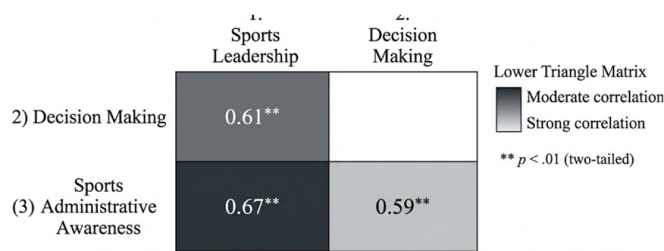


Figure 3 Bivariate Pearson correlation matrix between sports leadership, decision making and sports administrative awareness.

The findings support H1 and H2 regarding the statistically significant positive associations between the predictor variables and sports administrative awareness.

Multiple regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive contribution of sports leadership and decision-making to sports administrative awareness.

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 4, sports leadership ($\beta = .44$, $p < .001$) and decision making ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted sports administrative awareness. The standardized regression coefficients (β) indicate the independent predictive contribution of each predictor while controlling for the other predictor. Sports leadership demonstrated the stronger independent contribution ($\beta = .44$), followed by decision making ($\beta = .31$). The overall regression model explained 49% of the variance in sports administrative awareness ($R^2 = .49$) and was statistically significant ($F = 73.84$, $p < .001$). These findings support H3.

Table 4 Multiple regression analysis predicting sports administrative awareness

Predictor	B	Beta	t	Significance
Sports Leadership	0.42	0.44	5.87	$p < .001$
Decision-Making	0.29	0.31	4.26	$p < .001$

$R^2 = .49$; $F = 73.84$; $p < .001$

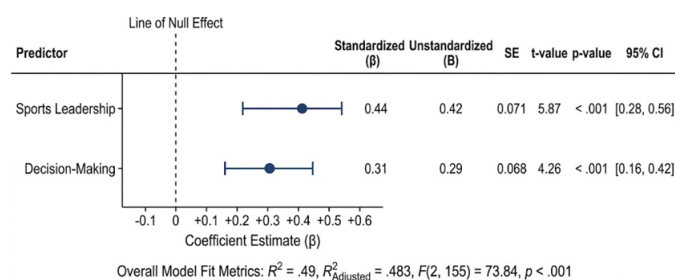


Figure 4 Standardized regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for predictors of sports administrative awareness.

Figure 5 further illustrates the positive relationships among sports leadership, decision-making, and sports administrative awareness.

These findings indicate that perceptions regarding sports leadership and decision-making are significantly associated with sports administrative awareness within sports education environments.

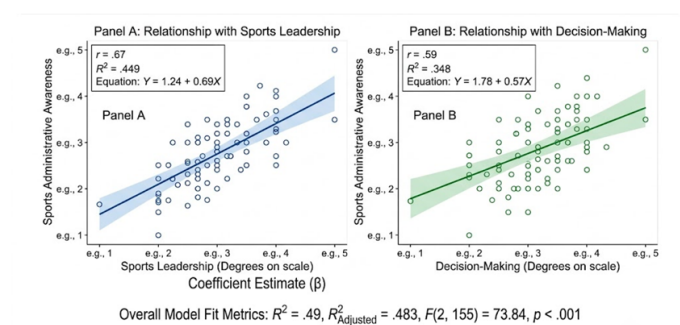


Figure 5 Scatter and regression plots for the relationship between independent variables and sports administrative awareness.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs. The findings revealed relatively high positive perceptions regarding sports leadership, decision-making, and sports administrative awareness among participants. Furthermore, the study demonstrated significant positive relationships between sports leadership, decision-making, and sports administrative awareness. The regression analysis also confirmed that sports leadership and decision-making significantly contributed to predicting sports administrative awareness.

The descriptive findings revealed that sports leadership obtained the highest mean score among all study dimensions. This finding indicates that participants reported positive perceptions regarding the importance of sports leadership within sports environments and recognized its role in improving organizational effectiveness and administrative understanding. Contemporary sport, physical activity, and health-related environments increasingly require effective leadership to strengthen communication, coordinate professional activities, and support organizational effectiveness. Therefore, sports leadership represents an important component in preparing sports sciences and health professionals capable of adapting to organizational transformation and administrative challenges.^{3,4,24}

The findings also indicated relatively positive perceptions regarding decision-making among participants. This result may be attributed to the increasing emphasis placed on analytical thinking, organizational awareness, and problem-solving skills within sports education environments. Contemporary professional environments in sport and physical activity require individuals capable of making effective administrative decisions under dynamic organizational conditions. Consequently, sports sciences and physical activity programs are increasingly expected to strengthen students' decision-making abilities to support their future professional readiness and organizational adaptability.^{11,13}

Additionally, participants reported relatively high levels of sports administrative awareness. This finding reflects the growing importance of administrative understanding within sports sciences and physical activity programs and contemporary professional environments. Administrative awareness contributes to improving organizational participation, leadership readiness, communication effectiveness, and institutional understanding among students preparing for future professional roles across sport, physical activity, and health-related settings.^{2,10}

The correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between sports leadership and sports administrative awareness, as well as between decision-making and sports administrative awareness. These findings suggest that perceptions of sports leadership and decision-making are closely associated with organizational understanding and administrative readiness within sports education environments. Students reporting stronger perceptions regarding sports leadership and decision-making were more likely to demonstrate higher levels of administrative awareness concerning organizational structures, leadership responsibilities, and governance principles.

The strong relationship between sports leadership and sports administrative awareness may be explained by the role of leadership in enhancing communication, organizational participation, and institutional understanding. Leadership experiences contribute to developing students' confidence, teamwork skills, organizational adaptability, and administrative competencies. Consequently, students exposed to leadership-oriented educational environments may become better prepared to understand organizational systems and participate effectively in administrative processes.^{1,3}

Similarly, the relationship between decision-making and sports administrative awareness may be interpreted in light of the importance of analytical thinking and organizational evaluation within sports management contexts. Effective decision-making requires individuals to assess organizational situations, evaluate alternatives, analyze available information, and implement appropriate administrative responses. Therefore, students reporting stronger perceptions regarding decision-making were more likely to demonstrate greater awareness of administrative structures and organizational processes within sports organizations.^{12,13}

The regression analysis further demonstrated that sports leadership represented the strongest predictor of sports administrative awareness, followed by decision-making. This finding highlights the importance of perceptions of sports leadership in enhancing students' organizational understanding and administrative readiness. Leadership appears to influence multiple organizational dimensions, including communication, teamwork, institutional participation, and governance understanding. Consequently, leadership development may represent an important approach to strengthening administrative awareness and professional preparation among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs, particularly those preparing for future roles across sport, physical activity, and health-related professional settings.^{2,4}

Practical implications

The findings of the present study provide several practical implications for sports sciences and physical activity programs, sports organizations, and policymakers responsible for developing human capital across sport, physical activity, and health-related professional settings.

First, sports sciences and physical activity programs should place greater emphasis on leadership development and administrative competency enhancement within academic curricula. Leadership-oriented educational experiences may contribute significantly to improving students' organizational understanding, communication competencies, and professional readiness.

Second, educational institutions should integrate practical decision-making activities, simulations, and administrative problem-solving exercises into sports management, sports sciences, and physical activity programs. Such approaches may help students develop analytical thinking, organizational evaluation skills, and evidence-

based decision-making required in contemporary professional environments.

Third, universities and sports institutions should collaborate to provide students with practical administrative experiences capable of enhancing sports administrative awareness and organizational adaptability. Internship programs, governance workshops, leadership seminars, and institutional training initiatives may contribute significantly to improving students' professional competencies.

Fourth, policymakers and sports organizations within Saudi Arabia should continue supporting leadership development initiatives aligned with Saudi Vision 2030 objectives related to governance reform, institutional modernization, human capital development, physical activity promotion, and quality of life.

Finally, the findings emphasize the importance of preparing sports sciences and health professionals with leadership, decision-making, and administrative competencies that enable them to contribute effectively to contemporary organizational and professional environments.

Conclusion

The present study examined the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness among students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs.

The findings demonstrated relatively high positive perceptions regarding sports leadership, decision-making, and sports administrative awareness among participants. Furthermore, significant positive relationships were identified between sports leadership, decision-making, and sports administrative awareness. The regression analysis also confirmed that sports leadership and decision-making significantly contributed to predicting sports administrative awareness.

Sports leadership emerged as the strongest predictor of sports administrative awareness, highlighting the importance of sports leadership in developing students' organizational understanding and administrative readiness. Decision-making also contributed significantly to predicting administrative awareness, emphasizing the role of analytical thinking and organizational evaluation within sports education environments.

The study contributes to contemporary sports management literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the combined contribution of leadership and decision-making to administrative awareness within higher sports education contexts. Additionally, the findings support the importance of integrating leadership development and administrative competency enhancement into sports sciences and physical activity programs aligned with the ongoing transformation of the Saudi sports sector and the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

Overall, the study highlights the strategic importance of preparing sports sciences and health professionals with stronger awareness and understanding of sports leadership, decision-making, and administrative practices capable of supporting organizational effectiveness and professional readiness across contemporary sport, physical activity, and health-related settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Sports sciences and physical activity programs should strengthen leadership development and administrative competency training

to better prepare students for future professional roles across sport, physical activity, and health-related settings.

2. Universities should integrate practical decision-making activities, administrative simulations, and organizational problem-solving exercises into sports education curricula.
3. Greater collaboration between universities and sports organizations should be encouraged to provide students with practical experiences in leadership, governance, and sports administration.
4. Sports organizations and policymakers should support leadership and administrative development initiatives that contribute to human capital development, institutional effectiveness, and the broader objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.
5. Future research should examine sports leadership, decision-making, and administrative awareness across different academic levels, institutions, and professional contexts to improve the generalizability of the findings.
6. Future studies may also investigate additional factors associated with professional preparation in sport, physical activity, and health-related settings, including organizational culture, governance awareness, professional competencies, and institutional readiness.

Limitations

The present study was subject to several limitations.

First, the study was limited to students enrolled in one Saudi university, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts.

Second, the study adopted a quantitative descriptive-correlational design relying on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may be influenced by participants' perceptions and subjective evaluations.

Third, the study focused specifically on first-year students enrolled in sports sciences and physical activity programs, which may limit the applicability of findings to students at other academic levels.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable empirical evidence regarding the contribution of sports leadership and decision making to sports administrative awareness within higher sports education environments.

Theoretical contributions

The present study contributes theoretically to contemporary sports management literature by integrating sports leadership, decision making, and sports administrative awareness within a unified analytical framework. While previous studies have frequently examined leadership or decision making independently, limited empirical evidence has explored their combined contribution to sports administrative awareness within higher sports education contexts, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

The findings support leadership theory perspectives emphasizing the importance of transformational and participative leadership approaches in enhancing organizational understanding and administrative effectiveness. The study also reinforces organizational behavior theories suggesting that sports leadership and analytical decision-making processes contribute significantly to institutional awareness and organizational adaptability.^{2,3}

Furthermore, the study contributes to sports governance literature by highlighting the importance of administrative competency development within higher sports education environments. The findings suggest that preparing sports sciences and health professionals requires not only technical and practical competencies but also leadership readiness, organizational understanding, and evidence-based decision-making capabilities aligned with contemporary governance systems and institutional transformation processes.^{1,13}

The study also contributes to Saudi sports management literature by providing empirical evidence related to leadership and administrative awareness within the context of Saudi Vision 2030 and the ongoing transformation of the Saudi sports sector. Given the rapid institutional modernization occurring within Saudi sports organizations, the present findings emphasize the importance of human capital development and leadership preparation within sports sciences and physical activity programs.^{17,20}

Future research directions

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, several future research directions are recommended.

First, future studies may examine the contribution of sports leadership and decision-making to administrative awareness across different academic levels and educational institutions to improve the generalizability of findings.

Second, future research may investigate additional organizational variables associated with sports administrative awareness, including organizational culture, governance practices, institutional communication, strategic management, and digital transformation within sports organizations.

Third, longitudinal studies may provide deeper understanding regarding the long-term impact of leadership development and administrative training on students' professional readiness and organizational competencies.

Fourth, future studies may adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches to explore students' perceptions and experiences related to leadership development and administrative awareness within sports sciences and physical activity programs.

Fifth, future research may examine leadership styles and their differential influence on organizational awareness and administrative competencies within sport, physical activity, and health-related professional settings.

Finally, comparative international studies examining leadership and administrative awareness across different sports education systems may contribute significantly to the development of global sports management knowledge and organizational best practices.

Ethical considerations

The present study adhered to contemporary ethical research principles throughout all stages of the research process. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed about the objectives and purpose of the study prior to completing the questionnaire.

All responses were collected anonymously, and no personally identifiable information was obtained from participants. Participants were also informed that their responses would be used exclusively for academic research purposes and would remain confidential.

The study procedures complied with accepted academic standards related to voluntary participation, confidentiality, responsible data handling, and research integrity. Additionally, no form of coercion or academic pressure was associated with participation in the study (Appendix A).

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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