

Demographic characteristics, personality traits, leadership qualities and work performance as predictors of the selection criteria for coaches

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Abstract:

In this study we investigated how demographic factors, personality traits, leadership qualities, and general work performance predicted the evaluation and selection criteria for coaches. Specifically, we identified key predictors that influenced various selection criteria and highlighted those with a significant impact on specific selection criteria, including (a) coaching results for athletes, (b) the coach's personal achievements, (c) the design and implementation of coaching programs, (d) competition management, (e) psychological support for athletes, and (f) commitment to the club. The study sample consisted of 585 coaches employed by 237 amateur sports clubs in Attica, Greece. Data were collected using measures of demographics, personality, leadership, general work performance, and coach selection criteria. A three-step hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the significant predictors of coach selection criteria in the context of amateur sports. The results indicate that specific demographic factors (such as primary professional occupation, age, professional experience, and previous athletic experience), personality traits (conscientiousness and openness to experience), leadership qualities (intellectual stimulation and administrative skills), and general work performance significantly influence and predict the selection criteria used by amateur sports clubs. Amateur sports clubs involved in this study prioritized coaches who had coaching as their primary profession, had extensive coaching and athletic experience, exhibited high levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience, and demonstrated strong intellectual stimulation and general work performance. The study shows that the selection of coaches in amateur sports settings involves a careful consideration of the knowledge, skills, competencies, and individual characteristics essential for effective coaching. It also provides valuable insights for sports clubs regarding coach selection criteria and offers important guidance for coaches working in this environment.

Key Words: amateur sports clubs, professional coaching, evaluation and selection process, job analysis, hierarchical multiple regression analysis

Introduction:

With the rapid expansion of sports in modern society, the coaching workforce has grown considerably over the past few decades, encompassing a wide range of coaching roles (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Graham & Dixon, 2017; North, 2009). Coaches are recognized as key contributors in the sports industry, particularly in youth sports settings, where they play multiple vital roles (Cushion & Partington, 2014) and are integral to the success and growth of sports clubs. As a result, there is a strong emphasis on high-quality and effective coaching, which is essential for providing an optimal sporting experience and fostering the development of athletes and sports participants (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Kavussanu et al., 2008; Mills & Boardley, 2017). Therefore, modern coaches must demonstrate competence and professionalism through their knowledge and training (Taylor & Garratt, 2013). In this context, selecting a coach is a complex decision that requires specialized personnel to design and execute the process. Coach selection involves choosing the individual who best meets the job requirements, based on position-specific criteria that reflect the tasks to be performed in a particular coaching role. These criteria are directly linked to the coaching context and domain, which define the coach's tasks, roles, and responsibilities (Horton, 2015; Lyle, 2020). Defining the appropriate selection criteria for a coaching position begins with a thorough job analysis. This analysis includes a job description, which outlines the scope of tasks associated with the role, and a job specification, which identifies the knowledge, skills, competencies, and behavioral attributes necessary to successfully perform these tasks. Additionally, it details the qualifications, training, and experience required for effective job performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

While each coaching position is unique, certain core coaching functions are common across roles. These include developing a vision and strategy for the coaching process, establishing a suitable coaching environment, fostering healthy and positive relationships with athletes and participants, conducting practices, preparing for and managing competitions, addressing emerging issues in the field, and promoting learning and improvement (Lara-Bercial et al., 2017). To effectively carry out these functions, a coach must possess both general and specific knowledge (Neelis et al., 2020; Stodter & Cushion, 2019). Beyond coaching knowledge, essential qualities, skills, and personal characteristics are also crucial for fulfilling key aspects of coaching. Researchers have identified several variables that differentiate the successful delivery of coaching tasks, including coaching experience (Chan & Mallet, 2011; Kramers et al., 2020; Lyle & Cushion, 2017; Neelis, Faucett, & Thompson, 2020; Schempp & McCullick, 2010), previous athlete experience (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006), sport level (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006), educational background (Hedlund et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2005; Zakrajsek et al., 2011), and gender (Schaeperkoetter et al., 2017; Cassidy et al., 2009). Additionally, effective coaching requires strong communication and interaction skills, leadership abilities (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Horn, 2008; Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Arthur, 2019; Martens, 2012; MacLean & Chelladurai, 1995; Rhind & Jowett, 2010; Sullivan, Rhind & Jowett, 2014), pedagogical, organizational, and administrative skills (Cassidy et al., 2023; Perkins & Hahn, 2019), along with critical thinking, reflection, autonomy, adaptability, decision-making, and needs analysis skills (Lara-Bercial et al., 2013). Consequently, personality traits and leadership skills are highly valued in this field (Predoiu et al., 2021). Research indicates that in selection processes where job analysis is used, personality traits are not only related to but can also predict both the task and contextual performance of employees (Jenkins & Griffith, 2004). Work performance consists of task performance, which pertains to job-specific duties, and contextual performance, which refers to an employee's contribution to the organizational culture and climate (Çalışkan & Köroğlu, 2022; Motowidlo & Schmit, 1999). Contextual performance is particularly crucial in human resource practices such as recruitment, selection, and performance evaluation. Murphy and Shirella (1997) argued that the effectiveness of selection procedures depends on the relative importance assigned to both task and contextual performance.

Amateur sports clubs are usually small volunteer organizations lacking formal organizational structures and specialized personnel in human resource management. The selection of a coach is an important decision that involves a process of identifying appropriate selection criteria to be used in order to select the individual that best meets job requirements. It is important to understand and identify the criteria used for selecting coaches in a context where typical recruitment procedures are not usually in place. The primary aim of this study was to investigate whether coaches' demographic characteristics, personality traits, leadership qualities, and overall work performance could predict the variables representing their selection criteria in the region of Attica, Greece. Based on the literature, three hypotheses were formulated and tested: (a) coaches' demographic characteristics are statistically significantly related to their selection criteria, (b) coaches' personality traits are statistically significantly related to their selection criteria, and (c) coaches' leadership qualities and general work performance are statistically significantly related to their selection criteria. This study contributes to the existing literature on sports coaching by offering new insights into how amateur sports clubs select coaches. It establishes a robust foundation for understanding coach selection criteria and provides evidence on the factors that predict these criteria.

Material and Methods

Participants

The study population comprised five hundred eighty-five (N=585) coaches selected by three hundred fifty-three (353) administrators of two hundred thirty-seven (237) local amateur sports clubs. Participants were selected using a simple random sampling method among the coaches working in amateur sports clubs in the Region of Attica, Greece. Demographics showed that 393 coaches were male (67,2%) while 192 were female (32.8%). The age of the coaches ranged from 18 to 69 years (M=40.2, SD= 10.28) and their working experience as coaches ranged from 0 to 50 years (M=14.2, SD=8.71). Most coaches (432, 73.8%) had a university degree. 514 (87.9%) coaches had a professional license in coaching and 542 (92.6%) had previous experience as athletes before becoming coaches. Sport coaching was the primary profession of 267 (45.6%) coaches while 318 (54.4%) reported other profession as their primary. The majority of the coaches in the sample (508, 86.8%) were coaches working from 1 to 35 years in the same sports club while only 77 (13.2%) were new recruits. In addition, demographic data showed that 491 (83.9%) coaches were part-time employees while 94 of those were working full-time in the club. Coaches under this study covered thirty-one sports with 333 coaches (56.9%) in individual sports and 69 (20,1%) in team sports. Administrators' participation in this study was voluntary while confidentiality and anonymity was adhered.

Procedure/Instruments

The main data collection instrument used was a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised five sections: (a) Information about the Club (year of foundation, sports, number of coaches) and demographic characteristics of administrators completing the questionnaire (gender, age, educational level, position held, years of experience in selecting coaches), (b) Demographic characteristics of the coaches (gender, age,

educational level, professional license level, years of experience, years in the club, sports coached, age of the athletes, the competition level of the athletes, coaching as main profession, employment status), (c) Personality assessment using the Personality Description Scale (19 items) (Kaprinis, 2015; Kaprinis et al., 2014; Kipreos et al., 2016), (d) Leadership qualities' assessment using the Leadership Scale (10 items) (Kaprinis, 2015; Kipreos et al., 2016), (e) General work performance assessment using General Work Performance Scale (10 items) (Kaprinis, 2015; Kipreos et al., 2016), (f) Selection criteria of the coaches identification using the Evaluation and Selection Criteria Scale for coaches (29 items) (Anthi et al., 2024). The personality assessment scale comprised five factors: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. The assessment of the transformational leadership characteristics included intellectual stimulation and administrative skills. The general work performance assessment scale comprised one factor. The Evaluation and Selection Criteria Scale for coaches comprising the following six factors: (1) the impact of coaching on athletes as "coaching results for athletes", (2) the personal achievements and the recognition of their coaching work as "the coach's personal achievements", (3) the "design and implementation of coaching", (4) the management of the competition aspects as "competition management", (5) the "psychological support for athletes", and (6) the support of the club as "the commitment to the club". The structural validity and reliability of the questionnaires have been adequately proven.

Data Collection and Analysis/Statistical Analysis

Data was collected between October 2020 and June 2021. The dependent and independent variables (predictors) set for this study are presented in Table 1. To estimate the relationship among variables and to determine the predictors of the selection criteria of coaches the statistical technique of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used (Cohen et al., 2003). Using this method the inclusion order of independent variables in the model is determined by the researcher, in contrast to other methods in which predictor variables are selected upon statistical criteria (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). To confirm the use of Hierarchical Multiple Regression for the study and to ensure the validity of the data the adequacy of the sample size was examined. The sample size of 585 was deemed adequate given the number of independent variables (15) subjected to the test. The ratio for this analysis was 585 valid cases to 15 (39 to 1) independent variables meaning that the minimum requirement of 15 to 1 was satisfied (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). No missing data was found. To address multicollinearity, the variance inflation factors (VIF) were examined. VIF measures the correlation and the strength of the correlation between the independent variables in a regression model. VIF values start at 1 and have no upper limit. VIF values close to 1 indicate that there is no correlation between a given independent variable with the others while a VIF value greater than 5 indicates a potentially severe correlation. In this study, none of the VIF values for the predictor variables were greater than 5 (VIF value ranged from 1.0 to 3.9), which indicated no multicollinearity (Coakes, 2005; Hair et al., 2010).

Correlations between independent variables were checked through the Pearson *r* correlation coefficient to confirm the lack of collinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The correlation coefficient takes values in the closed interval [-1, 1]. The *F* value in each model as well as the level of significance were evaluated. A statistically significant level of the *F* value means that the model explains a significant amount of the dependent variable. Each model was first evaluated by the coefficient of determination *R* Squared (*R*²) which normally ranges from 0 to 1 and measures how well the model predicts the dependent variable. *R*² can be interpreted as the percent of variance in the dependent variable explained by the set of predictor variables. The larger the value of the coefficient of determination, the better the fit of the regression model to the survey data. Adjusted *R*² represents the adjustment of *R*² according to the number of independent variables (predictors) entered in the model. Beta coefficients quantify the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable, assess the direction of the relationship, and evaluate the statistical significance. The standardized beta coefficient (*β*) ranges from 0 to 1 or 0 to -1 and represents the strength of the relationship between each predictor variable and the dependent variable as well as the direction of their relationship (positive or negative). The closer the value is to 1 or -1, the stronger the relationship.

Table 1. The dependent and independent variables (predictors) of this study

Independent Variables		Dependent Variables
Demographic characteristics		Selection criteria of coaches
	Gender	Coaching results for athletes
	Age	The coach's personal achievements
	Educational level	The design and implementation of coaching programs
	Sport career (years)	Competition management
	Professional experience (years)	Psychological support for athletes
	Years in the club	Commitment to the club
	Coaching as primary profession	
Personality characteristics		
	Extraversion	
	Agreeableness	
	Conscientiousness	
	Emotional stability	

Leadership characteristics	Openness to experience	
	Intellectual stimulation Administrative skills	
Work performance	Work performance	

Independent variables (predictors) were introduced in the model in the following order:

Step 1: Demographic characteristics of the coach,

Step 2: Personality characteristics of the coach,

Step 3: Leadership characteristics of the coach and General Work Performance.

Results

A three-stage Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis (method Enter) was conducted to examine the relationship between the set of independent variables: demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational level, sports career, coaching experience, professional experience in the club, and coaching as primary profession), personality characteristics (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience), leadership characteristics (intellectual motivation, administrative skills) and work performance against the dependent variables (Table 1).

Predictors of the “Coaching results for athletes” selection criterion

In the first step, demographic factors were entered into the model as independent variables (predictors). The model significantly predicted ($R^2 = .106$, Adj. $R^2 = .096$, $F(7, 584) = 9.824$, $p < .001$) demographic factors (age, $b = .130$, years of sports career, $b = .106$, work experience as a coach, $b = .130$ and main occupation as a coach, $b = .128$) as important predictors of the “Coaching results for athletes” as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports. In the second step, personality traits were added to the model. The model continued to significantly predict ($R^2 = .543$, Adj. $R^2 = .280$, $F(12, 584) = 19.965$, $p < .001$) the “Coaching results for athletes” factor as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports settings. In particular, the demographic characteristics of age ($\beta = .144$, $p < .05$) and the main occupation as a coach ($\beta = .088$, $p < .05$) remained robust predictors while personality characteristics such as openness to experience ($\beta = .392$, $p < .001$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = .175$, $p < .05$) emerged as important predictors as well. The third and final step involved the addition of leadership characteristics and work performance. The overall model continued to significantly predict the “Coaching results for athletes” selection criterion for coaches ($R^2 = .350$, Adj. $R^2 = .332$, $F(15, 584) = 20.382$, $p < .001$). The demographic factor of the age of the coach ($\beta = .128$, $p < .05$) and the personality trait of the openness to experience ($\beta = .219$, $p < .05$) remained significant predictors while the leadership characteristic of intellectual stimulation ($\beta = .175$, $p < .05$) and work performance showed a significant positive association with the “Coaching results for athletes” selection criterion of the coaches. Table 2 summarizes the indexes of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the dependent variable “Coaching results for athletes”.

Table 2. Model Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression - Dependent Variable: Coaching results for athletes

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.326 ^a	.106	.096	.106	9.824	7	577	.000
2	.543 ^b	.295	.280	.189	30.632	5	572	.000
3	.591 ^c	.350	.332	.054	15.835	3	569	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience.

b. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience

c. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience, intellectual motivation, administrative skills, work performance.

Predictors of the “Coach’s personal achievements” selection criterion

In the first step, demographic factors were entered into the model as independent variables (predictors). The model significantly predicted ($R^2 = .047$, Adj. $R^2 = .035$, $F(7, 584) = 4.028$, $p < .001$) demographic characteristics (gender, $b = .089$, years of sports career, $b = .095$, and primary profession as a coach, $b = .164$) as important predictors of the “Coach’s personal achievements” selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports. In the second step, personality characteristics were added to the model. The model continued to significantly predict ($R^2 = .970$, Adj. $R^2 = .970$, $F(12, 584) = 1559.925$, $p < .001$) the “Coach’s personal achievements” as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports settings. In particular, gender ($\beta = -0.30$, $p < .05$) remained a robust predictor while personality traits such as extraversion ($\beta = .181$, $p < .001$), agreeableness ($\beta = .803$,

$p < 0.001$), consciousness ($\beta = .034, p < 0.01$) and emotional stability ($\beta = .050, p < 0.001$) emerged as important predictors. The third and final step involved the addition of leadership characteristics and work performance. The overall model continued significantly to predict the “Coach’s personal achievements” selection criterion for coaches ($R^2 = .971, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .970, F(15, 584) = 1279.894, p < .001$). The demographic characteristic of the gender of the coach ($\beta = -0.29, p < .001$) and the personality traits of extraversion ($\beta = .171, p < 0.001$), agreeableness ($\beta = .804, p < 0.001$), and emotional stability ($\beta = .050, p < 0.001$) remained significant predictors while the leadership characteristic of intellectual stimulation ($\beta = .032, p < .01$) and work performance ($\beta = .032, p < .05$) showed a significant positive association with the selection criterion of the “Coach’s personal achievements”. Table 3 summarizes the indexes of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the dependent variable “Coach’s personal achievements”.

Table 3. Model Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression - Dependent Variable: Coach’s personal achievements.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.216 ^a	.047	.035	.047	4.028	7	577	.000	
2	.985 ^b	.970	.970	.924	3564.063	5	572	.000	
3	.986 ^c	.971	.970	.001	5.708	3	569	.001	

a. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as a primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience.

b. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience

c. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience, intellectual motivation, administrative skills, work performance.

Predictors of the “Design and implementation of coaching programs” selection criterion

In the first step, demographic characteristics were entered into the model as independent variables (predictors). The model significantly predicted ($R^2 = .101, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .090, F(7, 584) = 9.250, p < .001$) demographic characteristics (coaching experience, $b = .261$ and primary profession as a coach, $b = .113$) as important predictors of the “Design and implementation of coaching programs” factor as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports. In the second step, personality characteristics were added to the model. The model continued to significantly predict ($R^2 = .394, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .381, F(12, 584) = 30.984, p < .001$) the “Design and implementation of coaching programs” as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports settings. In particular, coaching experience ($\beta = .139, p < 0.05$) remained a robust predictor while personality characteristics such as consciousness ($\beta = .256, p < 0.001$) and openness to experience ($\beta = .311, p < 0.001$) emerged as important predictors. The third and final step involved the addition of leadership characteristics and work performance. The overall model continued to predict the “Design and implementation of coaching programs” selection criterion of coaches significantly ($R^2 = .473, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .459, F(15, 584) = 34.022, p < .001$). The demographic factor of coaching experience ($\beta = .118, p < 0.05$), and personality characteristics of consciousness ($\beta = .139, p < 0.01$) remained significant predictors while the leadership characteristics of intellectual stimulation ($\beta = .099, p < .050$) and administrative skills ($\beta = .146, p < .050$) as well as work performance ($\beta = .333, p < .001$) showed a significant positive association with the “Design and implementation of coaching programs” selection criterion. Table 4 summarizes the indexes of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the dependent variable “Design and implementation of coaching programs”.

Table 4. Model Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression- Dependent Variable: Design and implementation of coaching programs.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.318 ^a	.101	.090	.101	9.250	7	577	.000	
2	.628 ^b	.394	.381	.293	55.316	5	572	.000	
3	.688 ^c	.473	.459	.079	28.379	3	569	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as a primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience.

b. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience

c. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience, intellectual motivation, administrative skills, work performance.

Predictors of the “Competition Management” selection criterion

In the first step, demographic factors were entered into the model as independent variables (predictors). The model significantly predicted ($R^2 = .079$, Adj. $R^2 = .068$, $F(7, 584) = 7.070$, $p < .001$) the primary profession as a coach ($\beta = .105$, $p < .050$) as an important predictor of the “Competition management” as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports. In the second step, personality characteristics were added to the model. The model continued to significantly predict ($R^2 = .283$, Adj. $R^2 = .268$, $F(12, 584) = 18.853$, $p < .001$) the “Competition management” factor as the selection criterion of coaches in amateur sports settings. The age of the coach ($\beta = .147$, $p < .050$) and personality characteristics such as openness to experience ($\beta = .366$, $p < .001$), conscientiousness ($\beta = .180$, $p < .01$), and extraversion ($\beta = .104$, $p < .050$) emerged as important predictors. The third and final step involved the addition of leadership characteristics and work performance. The overall model continued to predict the “Competition management” selection criterion of coaches significantly ($R^2 = .307$, Adj. $R^2 = .288$, $F(15, 584) = 16.777$, $p < .001$). The age of the coach ($\beta = .129$, $p < .050$), openness to experience ($\beta = .239$, $p < .050$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = .132$, $p < .050$) remained significant predictors while work performance ($\beta = .193$, $p < .050$) showed a significant positive association with the “Competition management” selection criterion. Table 5 summarizes the indexes of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the dependent variable “Competition management”.

Table 5. Model Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression - Dependent Variable: Competition management.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.281 ^a	.079	.068	.079	7.070	7	577	.000
2	.532 ^b	.283	.268	.204	32.636	5	572	.000
3	.554 ^c	.307	.288	.023	6.354	3	569	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as a primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience.

b. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience

c. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience, intellectual motivation, administrative skills, work performance.

Predictors of the “Psychological support for athletes” selection criterion

In the first step, demographic characteristics were entered into the model as independent variables (predictors). The model significantly predicted ($R^2 = .043$, Adj. $R^2 = .031$, $F(7, 584) = 3.707$, $p < .01$) the primary profession as a coach ($\beta = .129$, $p < .01$) and the age of the coach ($\beta = .145$, $p < .05$) as important predictors of the “Psychological support for athletes” as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports. In the second step, personality characteristics were added to the model. The model continued to significantly predict ($R^2 = .361$, Adj. $R^2 = .348$, $F(12, 584) = 26.952$, $p < .001$) the “Psychological support for athletes” factor as a selection criterion of coaches in amateur sports settings. The age of the coach ($\beta = .165$, $p < .01$), openness to experience ($\beta = .251$, $p < .001$), agreeableness ($\beta = .219$, $p < .01$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = .129$, $p < .05$) emerged as important predictors. The third and final step involved the addition of leadership characteristics and work performance. The overall model continued to significantly predict the “Psychological support for athletes” selection criterion for coaches ($R^2 = .397$, Adj. $R^2 = .381$, $F(15, 584) = 24.964$, $p < .001$). The age of the coach ($\beta = .153$, $p < .01$), agreeableness ($\beta = .213$, $p < .001$), and intellectual stimulation ($\beta = .142$, $p < .01$) in addition to work performance ($\beta = .220$, $p < .001$) showed a significant positive association with the selection criterion of the “Psychological support for athletes”. Table 6 summarizes the indexes of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the dependent variable “Psychological support for athletes”.

Table 6. Model Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression - Dependent Variable: Psychological support for athletes.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.207 ^a	.043	.031	.043	3.707	7	577	.001
2	.601 ^b	.361	.348	.318	56.979	5	572	.000
3	.630 ^c	.397	.381	.036	11.228	3	569	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as a primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience.

b. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience

c. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience, intellectual motivation, administrative skills, work performance.

Predictors of the “Commitment to the Club” selection criterion of coaches

In the first step, demographic factors were entered into the model as independent variables (predictors). The model significantly predicted ($R^2 = .049$, Adj. $R^2 = .038$, $F(7, 584) = 4.254$, $p < .001$) the primary profession as a coach ($\beta = .174$, $p < .001$), the age of the coach ($\beta = .188$, $p < .01$) and the coaching experience ($\beta = .188$, $p < .01$) as important predictors of the “Commitment to the club” selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports. In the second step, personality characteristics were added to the model. The model continued to significantly predict ($R^2 = .233$, Adj. $R^2 = .217$, $F(12, 584) = 14.456$, $p < .001$) the “Commitment to the club” factor as a selection criterion for coaches in amateur sports settings. The age of the coach ($\beta = .206$, $p < .01$), the coaching experience ($\beta = -.222$, $p < .01$) and the primary profession as a coach ($\beta = .104$, $p < .001$) in addition to agreeableness ($\beta = .308$, $p < .001$) emerged as important predictors. The third and final step involved the addition of leadership characteristics and work performance. The overall model continued to significantly predict the “Commitment to the club” selection criterion for coaches ($R^2 = .264$, Adj. $R^2 = .245$, $F(15, 584) = 13.616$, $p < .001$). The demographic characteristics of the coaching experience ($\beta = -.234$, $p < .001$), the age of the coach ($\beta = .186$, $p < .01$), and the primary profession as a coach ($\beta = .094$, $p < .05$) as well as the personality characteristic of agreeableness ($\beta = .283$, $p < .001$) and the leadership characteristic of administrative skills ($\beta = .249$, $p < .001$) were found as important predictors of the “Commitment to the club” selection criterion. Table 7 summarizes the indexes of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the dependent variable “Commitment to the club”.

Table 7. Model Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression - Dependent Variable: Commitment to the club.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.222 ^a	.049	.038	.049	4.254	7	577	.000
2	.482 ^b	.233	.217	.184	27.378	5	572	.000
3	.514 ^c	.264	.245	.031	8.102	3	569	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as a primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience.

b. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as a primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience.

c. Predictors: (Constant), coaching as primary profession, educational level, professional experience in the club, gender, sports career, age, coaching experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience, intellectual motivation, administrative skills, work performance.

Discussion

A three-stage Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis was used in this study to identify significant predictors of the selection criteria for coaches employed by amateur sports clubs. The selection of sport coaches is related to analyzing the coaching job and defining the specific tasks required in a given context (Lyle, 2002; Horton, 2015). Selection criteria encompass the core functions of coaching, such as designing and delivering training, managing competition aspects, and supporting athletes (Lara-Bercial et al., 2017). Additionally, the evaluation and selection process considers factors such as coaching results for athletes, personal achievements in coaching, and commitment to the club (MacLean & Chelladurai, 1995).

The first hypothesis of this study examined whether certain demographic characteristics of coaches—such as age, gender, educational level, sports career, coaching experience, professional experience at the same club, and primary profession—predict their selection criteria. Regression analysis supported this hypothesis, revealing that the coach’s primary profession is a significant predictor of all selection criteria. Specifically, coaches who reported coaching as their primary profession were selected at higher rates across all selection factors. Notably, while 87.9% of the coaches in the study sample held a professional coaching license, only 45.6% reported coaching as their primary professional occupation.

Several studies in the sports coaching literature indicate that the profile of successful coaches is closely related to their age, professional experience, and sport-related experience (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Cushion et al., 2003; Erikson et al., 2007; Gilbert et al., 2009; Gilbert & Rangeon, 2011; Kavussanu et al., 2008; Nash & Sproule, 2009; Schempp & McCullick, 2010; Wiman et al., 2010; Young et al., 2009). Additionally, both years of practice and coaching experience have been identified as key predictors of coaching efficacy (Feltz et al., 2008; Kavussanu et al., 2008). Mallett (2010) and Jones, Armour, and Potrac (2003) suggested that a background in sports participation considerably enhances understanding of the technical, tactical, and cultural aspects of coaching. Consistent with these findings, this study revealed that both age and experience as a coach and athlete were significant predictors of most selection criteria factors. Consequently, sports clubs involved in this study place a high value on experience gained from years of coaching or athletic participation and prioritize selecting coaches who have coaching as their primary profession and possess such substantial experience.

This trend can also be attributed to the essential need for sports clubs to hire dedicated and skilled professionals to ensure effective coaching and overall success. Additionally, the increasing pressure from institutional and

governmental agencies to promote the employment of qualified professionals, coupled with financial support for sports clubs, contributes to this trend (Lara-Bercial et al., 2020). Specifically, in the Greek amateur sports context, these findings reveal a strong emphasis on the professional status of coaches, with sports clubs placing a high value on dedication to the coaching profession.

It was also expected that personality characteristics would significantly relate to and predict the selection criteria for coaches. Regression analysis supported this hypothesis, showing that the five dimensions of personality - extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience - are significantly related to and predict the coaches' selection criteria. Notably, conscientiousness and openness to experience were found to predict five of the six selection criteria each. Coaches who scored highly in these personality dimensions, were selected with the highest scores across these selection criteria. Personality traits such as openness to experience and conscientiousness have been found to positively correlate with the successful execution of organizational and administrative tasks involved in planning the coaching process (Shelley & Sherman, 1997) and with effective teaching and guidance in coaching (Bozionelos, 2004). The results align with research indicating that the personality profile of successful coaches often includes facets of the big five personality traits, such as sociability, confidence, organization, self-esteem, and emotional stability (Predoiu et al., 2021). These personality traits are typically found in individuals who are organized, hardworking, creative, disciplined, ambitious, patient, reliable, calm, committed to their relationships, and adept at managing stress (Berry et al., 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; McCrae, 1996). They also encompass the competencies needed to effectively carry out coaching tasks across various positions and fields (Horton, 2015; Lara-Bercial et al., 2017; Lyle, 2002; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). The study's findings provide evidence that amateur sports clubs consider personality traits when selecting coaches because they significantly relate to and predict the selection criteria used.

Next, the study examined the predictive validity of leadership characteristics and general work performance in relation to coaches' selection criteria. The regression analysis supported the relevant hypothesis, revealing that intellectual stimulation predicted several factors: "coaching results for athletes", "the coach's personal achievements", "the design and implementation of coaching programs" and "psychological support for athletes". Additionally, the coach's administrative skills were found to predict both "the design and implementation of coaching programs" and "the commitment to the club". Furthermore, general work performance emerged as a significant predictor for all selection criteria. Coaches who received high scores across all selection criteria excelled in evaluations of their leadership characteristics and overall work performance. These findings align with literature suggesting that transformational leadership is positively associated with athlete results (Callow et al., 2009; Charbonneau et al., 2006). Specifically, intellectual stimulation, a key aspect of transformational leadership, involves encouraging athletes to assess situations, solve emerging problems, leverage their existing abilities, develop new skills, and continuously review and improve their performance (Bass, 1999).

Conclusions

In this study, we evaluated the predictive validity of various demographic factors, personality traits, leadership qualities, and general work performance on the selection criteria for coaches in a Greek sample. The results showed that the primary profession of the coach is a demographic factor significantly related with all the selection criteria, while age, coaching professional experience and previous athletic experience significantly predicted most selection criteria. These findings highlight the high value placed by sports clubs on the primary professional occupation of the coach and the experience gained from the years of coaching and athletic participation.

Personality traits, especially conscientiousness and openness to experience, found to be significantly related with the selection criteria for coaches. In addition, results showed that those coaches with high scores across all selection criteria excelled in evaluations of their leadership characteristics and overall work performance. Thus, the hierarchical regression analysis revealed that amateur sports clubs prioritized coaches who had coaching as their primary profession, had extensive coaching experience as coaches and athletes, exhibited high levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience, and demonstrated strong intellectual stimulation and overall work performance.

In the amateur sports context, it is clear that sports clubs favor coaches who are professionally dedicated, excel in their roles, and possess the personality and leadership characteristics necessary for effective coaching. This study enhances our understanding of the coach selection process, emphasizing its complexity and the importance of considering knowledge, skills, competencies, and individual characteristics essential for effective coaching in amateur settings. The findings are valuable not only for amateur sports clubs but also for coaches seeking employment in this context. Future research can build on this study to explore coach selection criteria and their predictors across various regions, sporting environments, competitive levels, and types of sports (both individual and team).

Conflicts of Interest There are no conflicts of interest to be declared.

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