

# Senior basketball players conformity

Key words: **conformity, basketball players, coaches, club's management**

Ključne riječi: **konformizam, košarkaši, treneri, uprava kluba**

*Original scientific paper*

## Abstract

Conformity as a form of players' behaviour toward coach and club management was the research topic of this study. This research had an aim to establish the differences in conformity degree between groups of basketball players, classified by three criteria: competitive level, player's position and player's age. Examinees sample was formed of 75 senior basketball players. Modified conformity scale was used as an instrument of research (The Conformity Scale, Mehrabian, & Steffl, 1995). Internal reliability of a modified scale was  $\alpha = .74$ . Data was analyzed with help of non-parametrical Mann-Whitney test. Out of eight statements proposed, there were found significant differences in conformity degree between first leagued and second leagued players based on three statements. Among 'outside' and 'inside', and younger and older players, there were no differences found based on any statement. Results indicate that examined Bosnian-Herzegovinian players are fond to conformity in great degree.

## Sažetak

Konformizam kao oblik ponašanja igrača prema treneru i upravi kluba bio je predmet proučavanja ovog rada. Cilj istraživanja bio je da se utvrde razlike u stepenu konformizma između grupa košarkaša, razvrstanih po 3 kriterijuma: takmičarskom nivou, igračkoj poziciji i starosti igrača. Uzorak ispitanika činilo je 75 košarkaša seniora. Instrument istraživanja bila je modifikovana skala konformizma (The Conformity Scale, Mehrabian, & Stefl, 1995). Interna relijabilnost modifikovane skale iznosila je  $\alpha = .74$ . Podaci su analizirani uz pomoć neparametrijskog Mann-Whitney testa. Od 8 ponuđenih tvrdnji, evidentirane su značajne razlike u stepenu konformizma između prvoligaških i drugoligaških igrača po 3 tvrdnje. Između "vanjskih" i "unutrašnjih", te mladih i starijih igrača nisu evidentirane razlike ni po jednoj tvrdnji. Rezultati ukazuju da su ispitivani bosanskohercegovački košarkaši u velikoj mjeri skloni konformizmu.

## Introduction

Sport sociologists and basketball coaches are agreeable with the opinion that in every sport collective must be clearly defined social relations among players, coaches and club management. Most common companion to socialization process is conformity (Koković, 2000, page 82). Conformity is individual's adaptation to attitudes, opinion and behaviour patterns, and certain standards of a group in which he belongs to. Conformists are easily adapted to sport collective and club discipline. They are the favourites of authoritative and persistent coaches. Fonder to him are unstable, intellectually unformed, frustrated, authoritative, and persons of a lower status in a group.

Marjanović (1995) researched conformity of 40 girls and 40 young men, students of Belgrade highschoools by Ashe's technique. Variance analysis indicates that conformity degree is much larger in sexually homogenous, than in sexually heterogeneous groups. The ones who are mostly conformed are men compared with instructed subjects-men, then girls compared with instructed subjects-girls, following girls compared with instructed subjects-men, and the ones who are least conformed are men compared with instructed subjects-girls. Atkinson (2002) researched the reasons of Canadian women tattooing during three years. He states that environment pressure is one of the main reasons for tattooing. Examining the sample of 149 students, based on 11-item scale Likert type, Niemand (2006) states that women are greater conformists than men are regarded life and racial prejudices. He also states that majority of researchers come to conclusion that women are greater conformists. Examining validity orientations of 628 adolescents, Joksimović and Matic (2006) are evaluating conformity degree using scale-containing statements of necessity

of majority opinion acceptance, importance of fitting in a group and adjusting to expectations and demands of others. Positive relation between conformity and altruistic validity orientation is interpreted by aspiration of students-conformists to be accepted and favourite. Conformity is more emphasized with students whose parents have lower educational level. These parents insist on respecting authority and accepting conformity values.

Researches of conformity of sportsmen indicate that novice players are rapidly adjusting their behaviour to older players and team leader (according to: Carron, 1980). Younger adolescents and their parents have great expectations from coaches (Martin et al., 1999). They consider that coaches should be educated, competent, ambitious, hard working, etc. Authors conclude that young sportsmen are characterized with low conformity degree because of: a) their relatively short sport practice and b) parents' participation in their children's activities. Sherman et al. (2000) have researched opinions of Australian sportsmen about 'preferred coaching behaviour'. In addition, they conclude that sports-women are more tolerant to coach's autocracy, i. e., they are greater conformists than sportsmen are. After interviewing doped sportsmen, Mendoza (2002) claims that certain percentage of sportsmen doped because they have seen it from other sportsmen. Analyzing relations between Olympic medallists and their coaches, Jowett and Cockerill (2003) consider that readiness of sportsmen to completely subject to coach's tramage rules and principles is 'positive conformity', because such relation has lead to success. Definitely, regarding the relations coach-sportsman, many researches indicate of high conformity degree of players, whether it is about individual or collective sports (according to: Wildman, 2006).

Aim of this research was to establish differences in conformity degree with Bosnian-Herzegovinian basketball players based on three criteria: 1) player's competitive level, 2) player's position and 3) player's age.

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## Method

### Sample of the examined

By the end of League competition in season of 2005/2006, there were identified per three best-ranked teams of two competitive levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To be precise, examinee sample was formed of 38 basketball players of Bosnian-Herzegovinian First League (highest competition level, professionals) and 37 basketball players from the First League of Republic of Srpska (second competition level, semi-professionals). Therefore, that is 75 players altogether (M=24.2 yrs, SD=5.06 yrs). 49 of that number plays 'outside' position (forwards and guards), and 26 'inside' (centers). 33 of total number pertain in the group of older players ( $\geq 25$  years), while 42 players are in the group of youngsters.

### Sample of variables

Modified conformity scale was used as an instrument of research (The Conformity Scale, Mehrabian, & Steffl, 1995). Modification implied linguistic adaptation of statements, considering not to change their essence. Internal reliability of a modified scale was  $\alpha = .74$ . Statements regarding conformity toward coach were: 1) 'Coach is the team leader and should be respected by that matter' (Leader); 2) 'It is a good thing when coach consult players regarding certain questions' (Conspl); 3) 'Coach is under great pressure, so even when he does a mistake, he should be understood and forgiven' (Coastr); 4) 'All coach's ideas should be done without any complaints' (Coaide). Claims regarding conformity toward club management were: 1) 'Club management runs the club and, therefore, should be respected' (Manres); 2) 'Club management is manbenent, its only interest is club prosperity' (Manben); 3) 'Club management should have influence on coach's professional work (content, training, player's treatment by the coach, etc.)' (Manwor); 4) 'Opinion of club management regarding professional things (player's quality, player's competitive level form, etc.) must be respected' (Opiman). Players evaluated their compatibility with statements offered in five-degree scale of Likert type, where state 1 represents player's opinion 'I completely disagree', state 2 'I partially disagree', state 3 'I am indecisive', state 4 'I partially agree' and state 5 'I completely agree'. Dependent variables were: 1) competition level (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> league of Bosnia and Herzegovina), 2) player's position ('outside' and 'inside' players) and 3) playing experience (younger and older than 24 years).

## Data processing methods

Surveying was performed in the morning hours, before any kind of training activities. Author, along with his 2 assistants, and coaches of the teams examined, attended in the poll of players in a specially chosen room inside training gym. Non-parametrical Mann-Whitney test was used for testing hypothesis on varieties of two arithmetic means.

**Table 1.**

*Differences between first leagued and second leagued players in conformity degree*

|                        | Leader  | Conspl  | Coastr  | Coaide  | Manres  | Manben  | Manwor  | Opiman  |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Mann-Whitney U         | 470.500 | 610.500 | 617.000 | 596.000 | 518.000 | 381.500 | 661.500 | 680.500 |
| Z                      | -2.670  | -1.157  | -.961   | -1.190  | -2.101  | -3.569  | -.457   | -.248   |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .008    | .247    | .337    | .234    | .036    | .000    | .648    | .804    |

## Results and Discussion

From table 1 it is obvious that there are statistically significant differences among groups of players in statements 'Coach is the team leader and should be respected by that matter' (Leader), 'Club management runs the club and, therefore, should be respected' (Manres) and 'Club management is manbenent, its only interest is club prosperity' (Manben). By statements 'It is a good thing when coach consult players regarding certain questions' (Conspl), 'Coach is under great pressure, so even when he does a mistake, he should be understood and forgiven' (Coastr), 'All coach's ideas should be done without any complaints' (Coaide), 'Club management should have influence on coach's professional work (content, training, player's treatment by the coach, etc.)' (Manwor) and 'Opinion of club management regarding professional things (player's quality, player's competitive level form, etc.) must be respected' (Opiman) have no significant differences recorded.

Table 2 indicates about size and course of differences among groups of players at statements offered. By all statements players of First League of Bosnia and Herzegovina are greater conformists than players from First League of Republic of Srpska (column Mean) (statement 'It is a good thing when coach consult players regarding certain questions' (Conspl) has an opposite course from all others!).

**Table 2.**

*Descriptive statistics regarding player's competitive level*

|        | GROUP | N  | M    |
|--------|-------|----|------|
| Leader | 1     | 38 | 4.42 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 3.86 |
| Conspl | 1     | 38 | 4.47 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 4.67 |
| Coastr | 1     | 38 | 3.81 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 3.45 |
| Coaide | 1     | 38 | 3.86 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 3.48 |
| Manres | 1     | 38 | 4.28 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 3.72 |
| Manben | 1     | 38 | 4.15 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 3.18 |
| Manwor | 1     | 38 | 2.50 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 2.35 |
| Opiman | 1     | 38 | 3.07 |
|        | 2     | 37 | 3.00 |

Legend:

GROUP 1 – firstleagued players  
 GROUP 2 – secondleagued players  
 N – number of players by groups  
 M – arithmetic mean

Results from table 3 indicate that there are no statistically significant differences among 'outside' and 'inside' players in conformity degree.

In table 4, it is noticeable that players of both groups are slightly greater conformists toward coach than to club management.

Table 5 indicates that there are no significant differences between younger and older players in conformity degree.

Eventhough statistically not significant, younger players are slightly greater conformists than older players are (table 6).

It is obvious that basketball players of the First League of Bosnia and Herzegovina are greater conformists than players from the First League of Republic of Srpska. Hence, readiness to conform to the authorities is greater in players professionals than in semi-professionals. There are at least three reasons for this kind of

behaviour. First, professional basketball players have more qualitative coaches and club managements, so it is quite logical that they have more trust both in coach's professionally-pedagogical qualities, and in work of club management. Second reason can be related to their motivation for club performing. Vučković (2005) states that professional players mention high salaries as one of the most important motives for club performing.

Money, as a rewarding and punishing mean of players by coach and club management, makes those players great conformists. Third, but not less important, in Ex-Yugoslavia region has been strong cult of coach personality for thirty years. Merits for excellent results that clubs and representations from those areas have achieved were assigned to coaches (in great part), so the respect of hither players toward coaches is completely understandable.

**Table 3.**  
Differences between 'outside' and 'inside' players in conformity degree

|                        | Leader  | Conspl   | Coastr   | Coaide   | Manres   | Manben   | Manwor   | Opiman  |
|------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Mann-Whitney U         | 587.000 | 519.000  | 572.000  | 557.000  | 621.000  | 595.000  | 557.500  | 525.500 |
| Wilcoxon W             | 938.000 | 1744.000 | 1797.000 | 1782.000 | 1846.000 | 1820.000 | 1782.500 | 876.500 |
| Z                      | -.603   | -1.551   | -.763    | -.935    | -.191    | -.490    | -.919    | -1.289  |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .546    | .121     | .446     | .350     | .849     | .624     | .358     | .197    |

**Table 5.**  
Differences between younger and older players in conformity degree

|                        | Leader   | Conspl   | Coastr   | Coaide   | Manres   | Manben   | Manwor   | Opiman   |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Mann-Whitney U         | 578.000  | 673.000  | 605.000  | 542.000  | 603.000  | 599.000  | 639.500  | 563.000  |
| Wilcoxon W             | 1139.000 | 1576.000 | 1166.000 | 1103.000 | 1164.000 | 1502.000 | 1200.500 | 1124.000 |
| Z                      | -1.330   | -.252    | -.990    | -1.692   | -1.030   | -1.051   | -.593    | -1.441   |
| Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed) | .183     | .801     | .322     | .091     | .303     | .293     | .553     | .150     |

**Table 4.**  
Descriptive statistics by playing positions

|        | POSITION | N  | M    |
|--------|----------|----|------|
| Leader | 1        | 49 | 4.18 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 4.07 |
| Conspl | 1        | 49 | 4.48 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 4.73 |
| Coastr | 1        | 49 | 3.53 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 3.84 |
| Coaide | 1        | 49 | 3.61 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 3.80 |
| Manres | 1        | 49 | 4.00 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 4.03 |
| Manben | 1        | 49 | 3.63 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 3.76 |
| Manwor | 1        | 49 | 2.32 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 2.61 |
| Opiman | 1        | 49 | 3.16 |
|        | 2        | 26 | 2.80 |

Legend:  
POSITION 1 – 'outside' players  
POSITION 2 – 'inside' players  
N – number of players by groups  
M – arithmetic mean

**Table 6.**  
Descriptive statistics regarding player's age

|        | AGE | N  | M    |
|--------|-----|----|------|
| Leader | 1   | 42 | 4.26 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 4.00 |
| Conspl | 1   | 42 | 4.59 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 4.54 |
| Coastr | 1   | 42 | 3.76 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 3.48 |
| Coaide | 1   | 42 | 4.00 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 3.27 |
| Manres | 1   | 42 | 4.19 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 3.78 |
| Manben | 1   | 42 | 3.59 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 3.78 |
| Manwor | 1   | 42 | 2.47 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 2.36 |
| Opiman | 1   | 42 | 3.21 |
|        | 2   | 33 | 2.81 |

Legend:  
AGE 1 – players < 25 years  
AGE 2 – players ≥ 25 years  
N – number of players by groups  
M – arithmetic mean

There are no statistically significant differences between 'outside' and 'inside' players in conformity degree. Forwards and guards on one hand, and centers on the other hand, have similar opinions by all claims offered. Obviously, player's position has no influence on conformity degree of examined basketball players. In his research of social characteristics of senior basketball players, Vučković (2008) comes to conclusion that 'outside' players are more educated than 'inside' ones. Therefore, it was to expect that 'inside' players are greater conformists. ('More educated and more intelligent persons are greater individuals, i.e. less conformists'; Koković, 2000, page 83). Narimani and Ahari (2008) compare football strike players with defence players in some sociological characteristics for which it is assumed to influence the team success. They claim that defence players are greater conformists than strike players are. The reason for that they see in lower education degree of defence players.

Also, there were found no statistically significant differences between older and younger basketball players in conformity degree. Research made by Martin et al. (1999) associate that greater conformity at older players was expected. However, some earlier researches (according to: Carron, 1980) indicate that younger players rapidly adjust their behaviour to standards made by older players and the team leader.

Most famous North American sport sociologist, in his numerous studies (Carron, A. et al., 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2005) claims that for the team success, among other things, is essential players conforming in relations towards coach. Comparing successful and unsuccessful American teams from the Olympics in Atlanta, Gould et al. (1999) have researched the reasons of certain teams' unsuccess. Besides lack of team cohesion, experience and mental readiness, authors suggest that low conformity degree has contributed also to poor results. Sportsmen who were not prepared to completely subject to coach and his programme, registered the poorest results. In research of predisposition of sportsmen to individuality or collectivity, McCutcheon and Ashe (1999) state that 'individuals' are persons devaluating collective effort aimed to success, devaluating significance of insideteam relations and prefer high personal autonomy and individuality degree.

## Conclusion

Seen altogether, basketball players of Bosnia and Herzegovina have high conformity degree toward coach and club management. Conformity toward coach is greater than conformity toward club management. These results are similar to results of other researchers. However, it can be said that very low individuality degree is recorded in this research, especially regarding relation toward club management. Surprising (and disappointing!) are opinions of players who approve interfering club management in coach's professional and pedagogical work. It would be very interesting to offer the poll used in this research to population of leading basketball players of other European countries. Such comparisons would give an answer to question whether the high conformity degree of basketball players of Bosnia and Herzegovina is really justified.

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