

# REFRAMING FOLLOWERSHIP:

## COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON TEAM PERFORMANCE IN CARIBBEAN CRICKET



### IMPACT ON TEAM PERFORMANCE

- IMPROVED COHESION**  
Stronger unity through trust, respect and shared goals.
- ENHANCED MENTAL TOUGHNESS**  
Better focus, confidence and resilience under pressure.
- ADAPTIVE PERFORMANCE**  
Greater flexibility and responsiveness to changing conditions.
- SUSTAINED SUCCESS**  
Building a culture of followership that drives long-term excellence.

### ROOTED IN THE CARIBBEAN CONTEXT

- DIVERSE PLAYING CONDITIONS
- STRONG CULTURAL IDENTITY
- GOVERNANCE & DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

“ Empowering followership is not just a theoretical shift – it is a strategic imperative for revitalizing Caribbean cricket in an increasingly competitive global landscape. ”



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# APPRAISAL AND SEARCH STRATEGIES

Ensuring Rigour, Relevance and Reliability in the Review Process

## 1. APPRAISAL STRATEGY

### ACADEMIC LITERATURE APPRAISAL CASP Checklist

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) –  
A recognised appraisal tool to evaluate:



Validity



Outcomes



Relevance

Ensures reliability and rigour in concluding  
(Singh, 2013; Buccheri & Sharifi, 2017)

### GREY LITERATURE APPRAISAL AACODS Checklist

Evaluates credibility based on  
6 key criteria (Tyndall, 2010):



Authority



Accuracy



Coverage



Objectivity



Date



Significance

### APPRAISAL OUTCOME



Only sources that met the appraisal standards were  
included for further review and thematic analysis.

### QUALITY ASSURANCE



Structured  
checklists ensure  
systematic and  
transparent  
appraisal.



Enhances the  
trustworthiness  
of findings.



Balances academic  
rigour with practical  
insights from grey  
literature.



Strengthens the  
overall credibility  
of the review.

## 2. SEARCH STRATEGY & DATA ANALYSIS



### 1. CONSULTATION

Librarians from the University  
resource centre assisted with:  
keyword refinement, search  
parameters, and database  
selection.



### 2. DATABASE SEARCH

University of Derby library  
database selector was used  
to search between  
March – June 2025.



### 3. SOURCES CONSULTED

Academic databases and search  
engines used to identify peer-  
reviewed and grey literature.



### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

Selected studies were  
analysed thematically  
focusing on the interplay  
between key concepts.

### DATABASES SEARCHED



- SAGE
- Research Gate
- Taylor & Francis Online
- EBSCOhost
- ProQuest
- APA PsycINFO
- SPORTDiscus with Full Text
- Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection
- ScienceDirect
- Elsevier
- Journal of the Eastern Caribbean
- Commonwealth and Comparative Politics



Google and Google Scholar were also used  
to identify additional sources and availability.

### SEARCH APPROACH

- ✓ Broad search terms were used to discover peer-reviewed articles and grey literature (reform documents, media releases).
- ✓ Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were employed to narrow results.
- ✓ Descriptive search terms included: *Followership, Leadership, Team Performance, Sport, Coach–Athlete Relationship, Coach Relations, Athlete Relations, Follower Relations, Caribbean Culture, West Indies Cricket Culture, Team Culture, Psychological Safety.*
- ✓ Inclusion criteria: (a) explicitly discuss followership or leadership in relation to team performance; (b) English language and accessible (open access where possible).
- ✓ Exclusion criteria: non-English, anecdotal, or lacking relevance to followership, leadership, team performance or coach-athlete relationship.

### KEYWORDS & BOOLEAN OPERATORS USED



Followership OR  
Leadership  
AND Sport

AND



Team culture OR  
Caribbean Culture  
AND Follower Relations

AND



Coach – Athlete  
Relationship OR  
Coach relations OR  
Athlete relations

AND



Island nations Culture OR  
West Indies Cricket Culture

AND



Team performance OR  
Psychological Safety



FOCUSED, RIGOROUS  
& RELEVANT

This structured appraisal and search strategy ensured a comprehensive and credible review of the literature most pertinent to understanding followership, leadership and team performance in Caribbean cricket contexts.

# TWO OPENING QUESTIONS. ONE CENTRAL PURPOSE.

From a Cultural Challenge to a Performance Paradox.

## 1. THE CULTURAL STIGMA CHALLENGE

“ In a region where children are raised to lead and never to follow - what happens when eleven of them walk onto a cricket field together” ”



### RAISED TO LEAD

Independence, pride, self-expression, and standing out are celebrated.

### ELEVEN TOGETHER

The game demands alignment, trust, role clarity, and collective intent.

### THE TENSION ON THE FIELD



**THIS CHALLENGE IS THE CONTEXT.**  
It sets the stage for the deeper question.

## 2. THE PERFORMANCE PARADOX

“ The Caribbean has produced some of the most gifted cricketers in history. So why does the West Indies continue to underperform on the world stage — and could the answer lie not in who leads, but in how athletes follow?” ”

**A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE**  
Unmatched talent. Iconic players.  
A proud cricketing history.



**PERSISTENT UNDERPERFORMANCE**  
Despite the talent, the results on the world stage remain inconsistent.



### THE CRITICAL QUESTION

Could the answer lie not in who leads, but in how athletes follow?

### FOLLOWERSHIP AS A HIDDEN LEVER



**THIS PARADOX IS THE PROBLEM WORTH SOLVING.**  
It invites a shift in focus—from leadership alone to followership as a driver of success.



**TOGETHER, THESE QUESTIONS LAUNCH THE JOURNEY.**

From a cultural reality to a performance insight—through the lens of followership.

# FOLLOWERSHIP THEORY, DYNAMICS & TYPES OF FOLLOWERS

Followers are not passive recipients of direction, but active agents in co-creating performance.

## 1. FOLLOWERSHIP DYNAMIC



### The Visibility Gap

Leaders (e.g., captain, coach) are visible, celebrated and publicly recognised. Followers' foundational contributions are often invisible and undervalued.



### More Than Compliance

Followers are not passive recipients of direction. They co-construct leadership through trust, respect and open communication.



### Relational & Reciprocal

Leadership is a shared process. Effective follower-leader relationships build cohesion, collective efficacy and sustained success (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Northouse, 2021).



### From Safety to Performance

Psychological safety enables open exchange, learning and reflection—strengthening culture and allowing performance to thrive (Edmondson, 1999; Cooke et al., 2025).



When followers are empowered, heard and trusted, teams become cohesive, resilient and high performing.

## 2. TYPES OF FOLLOWERS (Kelley)

LOW INDEPENDENT THINKING / LOW ENGAGEMENT ← SPECTRUM OF FOLLOWERSHIP → HIGH INDEPENDENT THINKING / HIGH ENGAGEMENT



### 1. PASSIVE FOLLOWER

- Complies without initiative
- Waits to be told
- Little investment in outcomes
- Minimal contribution to team goals



### 2. CONFORMIST FOLLOWER

- Follows instructions without critique
- Reliable executor of plans
- Limited questioning or feedback
- Contributes within set boundaries



### 3. ALIENATED FOLLOWER

- Disengaged or resistant
- May have insight but withholds it
- Focused on self or insular identity
- Undermines cohesion and performance



### 4. EXEMPLARY FOLLOWER

- Proactive and engaged
- Offers constructive challenges
- Adapts to change readily
- Contributes strategically to collective success

### ALIGNMENT MATTERS



Misaligned Followership  
(Self-focused, insular, fragmented identities)



Aligned Followership  
(Co-creative, united, shared purpose)

### THE GROWTH PROCESS OF FOLLOWERSHIP



Dependence & Resistance



Reflection & Feedback



Constructive Dialogue



Active & Co-Creative Engagement

Aligned followership fosters trust, openness, innovation and resilience—key drivers of sustainable team performance (Uhl-Bien et al., 2013; Baird & Benson, 2022).

## 3. COURAGEOUS FOLLOWERSHIP (Chaleff)



### 1. ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY

Proactively takes ownership of outcomes and acts on shared purpose—not waiting for authorisation (Chaleff, 2009; Bunin et al., 2022).



### 2. SERVING THE LEADER

Supports leaders willingly, easing burdens and bringing complementary strengths to advance team goals (Bunin et al., 2022).



### 3. CHALLENGING WHEN NECESSARY

Speaks up—"stand up, stand out, risk rejection"—when leader actions conflict with shared values or integrity, balancing candour with care (Bunin et al., 2022).



### 4. PARTICIPATING IN TRANSFORMATION

Engages in and helps drive change, staying committed through turbulence and renewal (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Bunin et al., 2022).



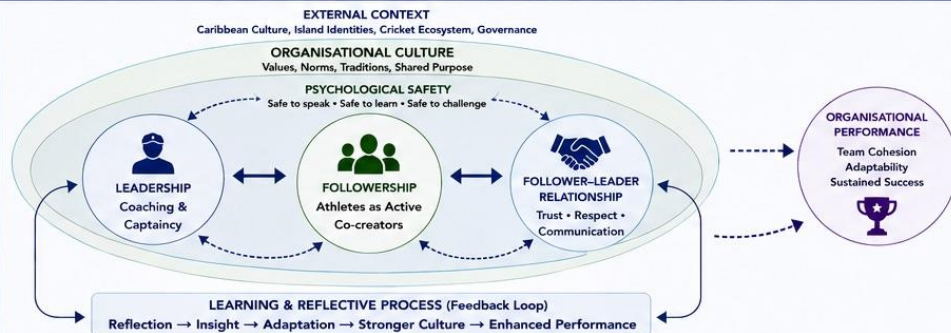
### 5. TAKING MORAL ACTION

When leadership crosses ethical lines, may withdraw support, raise concerns through formal channels, or leave—placing ethics above compliance (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Bunin et al., 2022).



Courageous followers strengthen integrity, accountability and long-term performance cultures.

## 4. FOLLOWERSHIP THEORY – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (Ecological Model)



Followership-Leader relations influence each other (Northouse, 2021). This ecological model illustrates the interdependence of key factors that drive team performance.

**Psychological Safety**  
Creates a "safe" space for open exchange, trust, and learning (Edmondson, 1999).

**Culture**  
Leaders and followers exchange within culture; strong, cohesive cultures amplify collaboration and unity (Zhao & Jowett, 2022).

**Leadership & Followership**  
Co-constructed through communication, mutual respect and shared purpose (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Cooke et al., 2025).

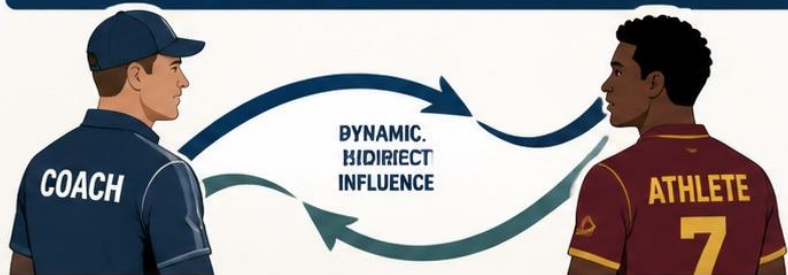
**Organisational Performance**  
Emerges when all layers function synergistically—resulting in cohesion, adaptability and sustained competitiveness.

Effective followership is not the absence of leadership—it is the presence of engaged, courageous and aligned participation that transforms potential into performance.

# FOLLOWERSHIP AS A RELATIONAL CONSTRUCT

— IN SPORTS LEADERSHIP: THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP —

## RELATIONAL APPROACH



### BUILT ON RELATIONAL FOUNDATIONS



**MUTUAL RESPECT**  
Valuing each other as people and partners



**COMMUNICATION**  
Open, honest and ongoing dialogue



**SHARED PURPOSE**  
Aligned goals for team and beyond

*“Leadership is a shared function.”*  
– Jowett & Chaundy, 2004

*“Foundation of coaching.”*  
– Jowett, 2025



**TEAM COHESION**



**COLLECTIVE EFFICACY**

## POWER RELATION CHALLENGES

### LAYERED POWER DYNAMICS



**ISLAND IDENTITY**  
Loyalty to island, community and national pride



**WEST INDIAN COLLECTIVE IDENTITY**  
Allegiance to the region and shared heritage



**RELATIONAL POWER**  
Influence through relationships, trust and respect

### TENSIONS IN FOLLOWERSHIP

**NATIONALITY LOYALTY**



**REGIONAL ALLEGIANCE**



NAVIGATING CONFLICTING IDENTITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

### GAPS IN THE LITERATURE



**Underexplored followership role**  
– Uhl-Bien et al., 2013



**Relational power shapes trust & creativity**  
– Shang et al., 2023

*Followers animate leadership*

# Layers of Performance

## LAYER A → B: PSYCHOSOCIAL SHAPES HOW SOCIOCULTURAL FORCES LAND

A → B

Psychosocial Shapes How Sociocultural Forces Land

### PSYCHOSOCIAL FOUNDATION



**Psychological Safety**  
I feel safe to speak up, question and learn.



**Relational Trust**  
I trust my coach and feel valued in the relationship.

(Edmondson, 1999; Jowett, 2017)

### SOCIOCULTURAL FORCE

Example: Caribbean stigma around "following"



Cultural norms, identity, history and power structures shape expectations.

(Lührmann & Eberl, 2020)

### FILTER (Psychosocial Lens)



Psychosocial conditions determine how culture is received and interpreted.

### TWO DIFFERENT RECEIPTS



#### High Safety + High Trust

- Questions the norm
- Reframes internally
- Engages fully
- Culture is **RENEGOTIATED**



#### Low Safety + Low Trust

- Absorbs the norm
- Sees followership as submission
- Disengages or resists
- Culture is **REPRODUCED**

### KEY TAKEAWAY



Sociocultural forces are not deterministic. Psychosocial conditions are the filter through which culture is either reproduced or renegotiated.

## LAYER B → C: SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT SETS THE BOUNDARIES OF BEHAVIOUR

B → C

Sociocultural Context Sets the Boundaries of Behaviour

### SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT



Inter-island identity fragmentation



Top-down CWI governance



Uneven pitch conditions



Colonial history, pride, masculinity, respect norms

These form the environment within which behaviour occurs.

### FROM CONTEXT → FOLLOWERSHIP SCRIPTS

#### BARBADOS



Socialised into discrete performance identity and norms

**Script:**  
Loyal, disciplined, respect authority, measured challenge

#### GUYANA



Socialised into different performance identity and norms

**Script:**  
Expressive, resilient, question authority, adapt improvisationally

#### JAMAICA



Socialised into distinct performance identity and norms

**Script:**  
Fearless, competitive, challenge openly, team before self

Different inheritances → Different expectations → Different followership styles

### BEHAVIOURAL EXPRESSION Visible on the Pitch



How players respond to instructions, how much they challenge, how they align with a unified vision—reflects their sociocultural inheritance.

### KEY TAKEAWAY



Sociocultural context creates boundaries and scripts that shape behaviour. This explains why a collective of different followership cultures exist on the same pitch.

## LAYER C → C: PERFORMANCE: BEHAVIOUR IS THE MECHANISM, NOT THE CAUSE

C → P

Behaviour Is the Mechanism, Not the Cause

### UPSTREAM INFLUENCES



Psychosocial Foundation (Safety + Trust)



Sociocultural Context (Norms + Structures)



Filtered and Shaped Through the System

### BEHAVIOURAL LAYER – THE MECHANISM

What athletes and coaches actually DO in the relationship

#### EXEMPLARY FOLLOWERSHIP BEHAVIOURS

- ✓ Challenges constructively
- ✓ Contributes tactically
- ✓ Communicates openly
- ✓ Supports teammates
- ✓ Adapts across conditions
- ✓ Aligns with unified vision



This is where influence becomes action.

#### PASSIVE / ALIENATED FOLLOWERSHIP BEHAVIOURS

- ✗ Does not challenge or ask
- ✗ Minimal contribution
- ✗ Withdraws or stays silent
- ✗ Individual over collective
- ✗ Resists or complies
- ✗ Disconnected from vision

### PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Collective Team Performance



#### ENABLED

Cohesion, adaptability, clarity, resilience, consistent execution, sustained success



#### UNDERMINED

Fragmentation, confusion, poor execution, conflict, inconsistency, underperformance

### KEY TAKEAWAY



Performance is produced by behaviour. Interventions must target behaviour—but will only sustain if psychosocial and sociocultural conditions support them.

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATION



Coach Education:  
Build followership-aware coaching practices



Followership Development Programmes: Build skills in voice, challenge, contribution



Inter-Island Academy Structures: Create shared norms, cross-cultural understanding



Feedback & Reflection Systems: Reinforce behaviours that drive collective performance



Aligned across all three layers → Behaviour change → Performance improvement

# SOCIOCULTURAL AND ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR FOLLOWERSHIP IN WEST INDIES CRICKET COACHING

## SOCIOCULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

1

### ISLAND IDENTITY AS FOLLOWERSHIP FRACTURE



- “Island identities can override team identity, creating in-groups and out-groups.”
- “Collective West Indies identity must be actively cultivated for effective followership.”

2

### CARIBBEAN STIGMA AROUND FOLLOWING

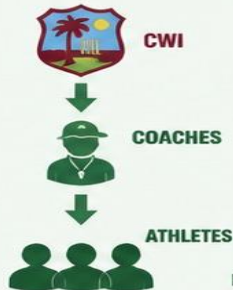


- “In Caribbean culture, following is often mistaken for weakness or lack of ambition.”
- “Followership education must reframe following as a mark of wisdom, loyalty and contribution.”

## ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

3

### COACHES ARE ALSO FOLLOWERS



- “Coaches follow governing bodies, policies and systems. Recognising this shared followership builds empathy and alignment.”



4

### TOP-DOWN GOVERNANCE SUPPRESSES FOLLOWERSHIP

#### TOP-DOWN PYRAMID



Limited voice.  
Low engagement.  
Compliance over commitment.

#### HYBRID CIRCLE MODEL



Shared voice.  
Mutual influence.  
Commitment and ownership.

**HYBRID GOVERNANCE ENABLES FOLLOWERSHIP IN CARIBBEAN COACHING**

5

### RELATIONAL POWER AS ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCE



- “Invest in relational development to unlock trust, discretionary effort and excellence.”

**STRONG FOLLOWERSHIP BUILDS STRONGER TEAMS. STRONGER TEAMS BUILD A STRONGER WEST INDIES.**

# CONCLUSION

Reframing Followership. Strengthening Caribbean Cricket.



**FOLLOWERSHIP MATTERS.** This review has reframed followership as a critical yet underexplored dimension of the coach–athlete relationship in Caribbean cricket, highlighting its profound impact on team cohesion, psychological safety, and team performance.



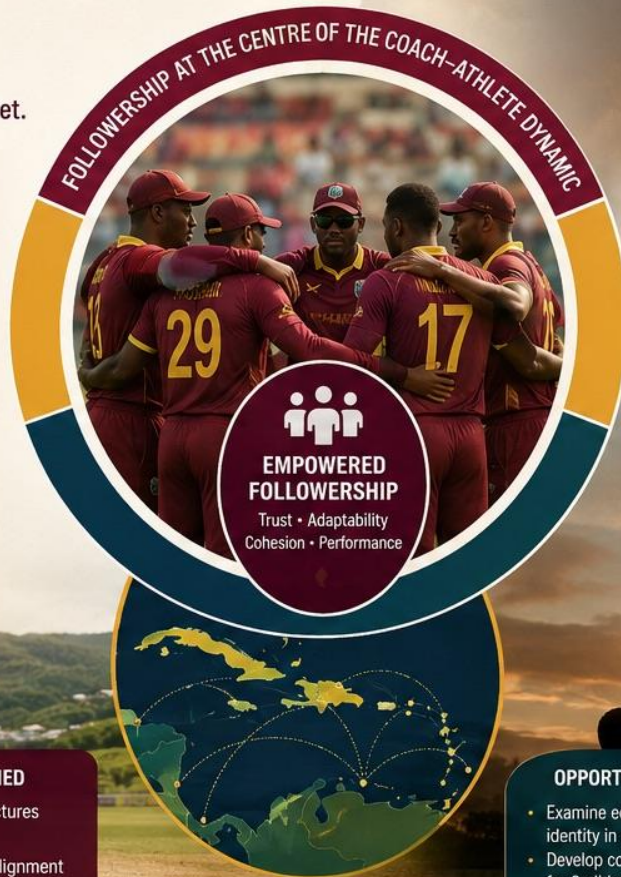
**NOT PASSIVE, BUT CO-CREATIVE.** Followership is not a passive counterpart to leadership but an active, co-creative process that shapes how teams adapt, innovate, and sustain competitiveness.



**ECOLOGICAL, CULTURAL & TEAM INFLUENCES.** The review revealed how fragmented coaching structures and inter-island identities often hinder the alignment of followership, producing inconsistency and reduced collective efficacy.

## CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Fragmented coaching structures
- Inter-island identities
- Inconsistent followership alignment
- Reduced collective efficacy



## RECIPROCAL & EMPOWERING.

When athletes and coaches embrace followership as a reciprocal and empowering process, relational trust is strengthened, adaptive capacity is enhanced, and performance outcomes improve.



## SITUATED IN CONTEXT.

Followership must be situated within broader ecological and cultural frameworks. In the Caribbean, diverse playing conditions, governance complexities, and historical legacies uniquely shape developmental pathways.



## RESEARCH GAP & OPPORTUNITY.

The paucity of research focused on the Caribbean context limits theoretical and practical insights. This gap offers opportunities to extend followership theory beyond Western paradigms and to inform more contextually grounded models of coach–athlete development.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Examine ecological diversity and cultural identity in shaping follower behaviours
- Develop contextually grounded frameworks for Caribbean cricket
- Foster sustainable performance and long-term competitiveness

## A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR CARIBBEAN CRICKET.

By repositioning followership at the centre of the coach–athlete dynamic, this review

EMPOWERING FOLLOWERSHIP IS NOT ONLY A THEORETICAL SHIFT—IT IS A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE



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