

Impact of Team Cohesion on performance among Tunisian Women Soccer Players

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Abstract: *Group cohesion is a dynamic process where the group tends to remain together and united in the pursuit of its goal for the satisfaction of the affective needs of group members (Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, and Carron, 2001). Team cohesion exists where players are united in a common purpose (Cashmore, 2002). Athletes often spend time together or share common interests outside of their chosen sport. A challenge to any team is the maintenance of the team, rather than focusing on the individual. Our Study aims to identify the relationship between sport cohesion and performance among Tunisian women football players. Our results have shown a significant impact of team cohesion on the football performance.*

Keywords: *Team Cohesion – Sport – Performance.*

I. Introduction

Social groupings are part of the human's relationship with society. Groups have power and a culture, distinct to itself. Groups contain characteristics that are common to every other group, but they also possess characteristics unique to the group in question (Eys, Burke, Carron, and Dennis, 2006). A group has a common fate to its members, a mutual benefit for members, social structure, group processes, and self-categorization. Common fate means that the whole team wins or the whole team loses. Pain & Harwood, (2009) describes a group as a set of individuals who interact and depend on each other. He further describes group members as being willing to help other group members and relying on help from other group members. Social cohesion is the degree to which the members of a team like each other and receive personal satisfaction from each others' presence (Cox, 2006).

Group cohesion is a dynamic process where the group tends to remain together and united in the pursuit of its goal for the satisfaction of the affective needs of group members (Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, and Carron, 2001; Veach & May, 2005). It is multidimensional, dynamic, instrumental, and affective. Individual and group aspects of cohesion are based on the beliefs and perceptions of individual group members. Group integration concerns the beliefs that individual members hold about the team. Individual attractions to the group relates to the member's beliefs about what attracted him to the team. These two categories are each subdivided into task and social orientations. These things together create an individual and group sense of team cohesion. A highly cohesive group is more likely to be united and committed to success than a group with low cohesion (Jarvis, 2006).

Team cohesion exists where players are united in a common purpose (Stevens & Bloom, 2003; Cashmore, 2002). Athletes often spend time together or share common interests outside of their chosen sport. This is known as social cohesion. Similar to group cohesion is task cohesion, where players are united to accomplish a specific task. A challenge to any team is the maintenance of the team, rather than focusing on the individual. If a team is composed of outstanding individuals, the focus may be too heavily on the contributions and performance of those individuals, and as such the collective team will underperform. It is the assembly of individuals into a cohesive unit where each uses their individual strengths into a team where each individual is a part of something larger than the individual. Four factors affect team cohesion: a clear role for team members, willingness to make personal sacrifices for the team, the quality of communication between team members, and shared goals for the team (Martin et al., 2009). Numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between team cohesion and success.

To have team cohesion there must be an effective team climate (Anshel, 2003). This climate is the atmosphere, environment, and perceived conditions and interrelationships among team members. Team climate is a psychological construct, a value judgment made by the players. This team satisfaction will have a great effect on an athlete's desire to be a part of the team. Team members want a certain amount of autonomy, not having all decisions made unilaterally by the coach. Members want emotional support from coaches and their fellow teammates. There must be a balance on stress and the pressure to succeed, encouraging athletes to aspire to new heights while not being pushed beyond their limits. The coach must recognize the athletes' improvements and successes.

Task cohesion or group integration is an indication of how well the team operates as a working unit, while social cohesion or individual attraction refers to how well team members like each other and to the team's identity (Lavallee, Kremer, Moran, and Williams, 2004). Further, most studies and efforts in building cohesion has been focused on the outcome of winning. Preferably, cohesion efforts should focus on the processes and the team building effort directly. Winning will take care of itself. Task cohesion is exemplified in individuals working together to achieve a specific and identifiable goal (Cox, 2007).

Carron wrote of determinants of team cohesion (Midura & Glover, 2005; Cashmore, 2002). Situational factors such as living with or near each other, sharing hobbies and activities, similar uniforms and clothing, rituals of group cohesion, and a unique distinctiveness as a group. Personal factors, such as commitment and satisfaction, leadership factors, and a democratic style of leadership also support team cohesion. Team factors that support cohesion include the clarity with which each member understands and accepts his role with the team.

Another factor is success. Success in competitive sports increases team cohesion. Further, as was discovered by other researchers, Carron et al. (2002) concluded that smaller teams are more cohesive.

Senécal et al. (2008) described the correlates of team cohesion as being: environmental factors, team factors, leadership factors, and personal factors. Physical proximity, or being physically close to others, creates a greater tendency to form personal bonds (Eys et al., 2006). However, that is not necessarily sufficient. There has to be distinctiveness, with commonality, oneness, and unity among the group. This may also be created through an organizational culture, mottos, uniforms, and initiation rites. Team size can play a role, where a moderate size is most effective for creating cohesion (Bruner & Spink, 2011).

There are several correlates of cohesion in sport (Paskevich et al., 2001; Eys et al., 2006). These include: (1) environmental factors, such as normative pressures; (2) personal factors, such as a personal sense of responsibility for negative outcomes; (3) leadership factors, such as the task versus person orientation; and (4) team factors. Environmental factors that may affect the team include the level of the competition and the size of the team. There are more pressures at a state championship, and larger teams have more team members to communicate and coordinate with. Personal factors may include issues such as social loafing, which is identified by team members not contributing their share to the team effort. Successful teams have a code or standards that are accepted by all, in a process known as norming (Cashmore, 2002). These norms may include adherence to a routine or engaging in certain eating habits prior to a game. Successful teams are comprised of players who have high levels of self confidence.

Competition is the essence of sports. It provides a setting where two groups or teams provide resistance that inadvertently develops the potential, performance, and capabilities of their opponents. Both parties ultimately profit from the competition, by developing skill and self-efficacy. Each team is forcing the other to produce their best efforts (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Social facilitation explains how an athlete's performance is facilitated and enhanced by the presence of others (Murray, 2006; Cashmore, 2002). The presence of others instills a competitive instinct, or a desire to at least keep up. This is social facilitation. The presence of other competitors and observers increase drive or arousal level. The conscious awareness of the presence of others drives an athlete to perform better (Lavallee et al., 2004).

II. Method

35 women football Player belonging to two Tunisian teams (Tunisian sport Union Team and Habitat Bank Team) participated in our study.

First, the players were grouped in football field before the training session on the eve of the match to complete the sociometric questionnaire. We asked all members of a group who already know to indicate on a scale of preference with which they want to associate (feelings of attraction) for a given activity (to work together). Similarly, they were asked to show their revulsion and indifference to other group members.

For that, we have used the multiple regression step by step (stepwise regression) in order to see if the player's sociometric scores are related to their individual performance.

III. Résultats

1. Stepwise regression of football received passes

The statistical data of the football received passes are indicated in the following table:

Table 1: Stepwise regression of football received passes.

		SD	t	Sig.
1	Nb of valued operational received choices	0,039	7,136	0,001
2	Nb of valued operational received choices	0,039	3,501	0,001
	Nb of valued received social rejection	0,094		
3	Nb of valued operational received choices	0,04	4,08	0,001
	Nb of valued received social rejection	0,16		
	Nb of valued operational rejection	0,078		

Our statistical data showed us a very significant regression of received passes on the operational score choices which are valued by social releases or by operational rejection.

However, if the first two coefficients are positive, that in connection with the third operational discharges is negative.

2. Stepwise regression of football successful passes.

The statistical data of the football successful passes are indicated in the following table:

Table 2: Stepwise regression of football successful passes.

		SD	t	Sig.
1	Nb of valued crude operational social choice	0,104	1,696	0,95
2	Nb of valued crude operational social choice	0,112	-0,661	0,511
	Nb of valued received social rejection	0,077		
3	Nb of valued crude operational social choice	0,118	-0,028	0,978
	Nb of valued social rejection	0,114		
	Nb of valued operational rejection	0,056		

The calculation of the multiple stepwise regression of successful passes data on the different scores of sociometric test, we found that performance at the successful given passes is determined by three independent variables valued by social choice, social releases and operational discharges. This leads us to conclude that players who receive much valued social choice and the most socially rejected players managed well their passes.

3. Stepwise regression of football missed passes.

The statistical data of the football received passes are indicated in the following table:

Table 3: Stepwise regression of football missed passes.

	SD	t	Sig.
Nb of valued crude operational social choice	0,023	3,274	0,002
Nb of valued crude operational social choice	0,027	0,589	0,558
Nb of valued operational rejection	0,036		

The calculation of the multiple stepwise regression of failed passes on different sociometric test scores showed that the performance of the players at the missed given passes, is dependent on two independent variables such as valued social choice with positive coefficient and gross operational discharges with positive coefficient. This allows us to conclude that the less socially selected players as well as players who emit more gross operational discharges have a high degree of inefficiency in the passes.

IV. Discussion

Cohesion is one of the most widely studied concepts in small-group performance and intra- and intergroup relations (Chicchio & Essiembre, 2009). In the most recent meta-analytic review of cohesion and performance, Chicchio and Essiembre (2009) chose to differentiate the cohesion–performance correlations according to team type. They found that task cohesion was more strongly related to performance than was social cohesion but only in academic-project teams and in outcome performance rather than behavioral performance, which clarified the disparate findings of Beal et al. (2003) concerning task and relationship cohesion.

Our study aimed to clarify the relationship between team cohesion and its impact on football performance among Tunisian women players. Our statistical findings have shown a significant effect of cohesion intra- group (between women football players in the same team) on their task performances with best scores of successful passes. These results showed us that the attraction between the same team players perform their success which is consistent with findings of (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Chang & Bordia, 2001; Hoigaard, Säfvenbom, & Tonnessen, 2006; Carron, Colman, Wheeler, & Stevens, 2002; who supported a positive relationship between team cohesion and performance.

Furthermore, we have found that women football players who are less appreciated by their team-mates had bad performances with missed football passes which indicates the importance of team cohesion on the task performance which is consistent with results of (Lavalley et al., 2004; Murray, 2006; Cashmore, 2002; Bruner & Spink, 2011) who found that group performance had a stronger and more stable relationship, also they found stronger evidence that performance produces cohesion (Salas et al., 2008; Pina et al., 2008).

V. Conclusion

Following this work, it seems interesting to have a conclusion that team building seems to be the reason behind team cohesion which may lead to best performance. These findings explain the big relationship between team cohesion and soccer performance which needs a successful team environment and players intimacy.

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