Group Cohesion among Football Players: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to compare Group Cohesion at three different levels of competitions in football. Twenty (20) players were selected randomly from each levels i.e. Intervarsity, intercollege and district players. To assess Group Cohesion at three different levels, Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) by Brawley and Widmeyer questionnaire was used. F ratio (Analysis of variance) was used to assess the data. There was no significant difference found in Group Cohesion at all three levels of competitions in football.

KEYWORDS: Group Cohesion, football

INTRODUCTION

Coaches at all levels of the game will at some point come in contact with a team that lacks cohesion. Cohesion refers to the togetherness and unity of the team; it is often highlighted as a ‘good team spirit’. A lack of this can have major effects on a team’s performance. There are many examples from the all level of game. Where teams who have quality individuals, do not perform to the levels expected from them. This can be down to cohesion within the squad. As a major contributor towards performance, a modern coach should always monitor their squad for signs of cohesion.

A team with good morale and cohesion can be identified through the behaviour of the players when in the group. A cohesive group will talk freely amongst each other, whether about task or not. Small groups or ‘clicks’ can be apparent but do not define the team dynamics, as each small group is able to speak and interact with all members. These players often refer to the team as ‘we’ or ‘us’ and work towards a collective goal. They often are aware of the team’s aims as a whole and what they need to do to get there. A team lacking cohesion will often form small groups which alienate themselves from others, preferring to only interact amongst themselves; these can be players or coaching staff. Players are often focused on individual success and say things like ‘you’ or a specific player when identifying faults or problems. Communication is often minimal, especially between coaching staff and players, lengthening the gap between players. Sports psychologists suggest that using team social events and ‘bonding’ exercises are a good way to ‘gel’ the team together. These can be very effective, especially when bringing in new players to a squad. This kind of team activity can improve the morale of the players and often lift tension and prevent stress occurring.

It is very important that each player understands their role within the team; this is where communication plays a major role. In order for a team to perform as a unit, each part must understand their individual tasks. This can be highlighted in training through patterns of play and focused session plans. It can also be identified through clear and specific instructions; the delivery of these is the most important issue. A coach must be
very careful how they impart knowledge, praise and negative feedback to a player. It can have an adverse effect on players if an individual is highlighted within the group, or if a player is excluded from praise. By taking the time to speak to the player face to face and one on one; the coach implies that the player is important to them. This is the ideal time to give out specific praise and fill the player with confidence, but also to provide constructive criticism and redefinition of their role. This will help to ensure that each member understands their specific role within the team; it will give them better ownership of their tasks and their relation to the team.

How a coach delivers feedback is very important psychologically to a player. Be too negative and the player may feel unwanted and ineffective; be too nice and the message for improvements may not get across. It is this balancing act that a coach must deal with and there are methods to help deal with this. The ‘good – bad – good’ strategy, consists of giving the player some praise, some constructive criticism, followed by some praise. It is important that this information is specific and highlights exactly what the player needs to do improve their performance and conform to their team role. An example may be ‘great work rate from you in the first half, excellent pressing of the ball. I noticed we were looking to play the ball behind too many times, when there was time to get the ball down and play short and wide. Be aware of your space and look to play wide early to feet when you have the option. You are our engine in there, so keep us ticking over with your passing ability.’

Another way to help reinforce job roles and ensure that feedback is being received, is to check understanding; getting the player to repeat their role or to acknowledge their new role. This can be done with simple questions and can be very quick, highlighting that the player understands what they need to do know. This may be ‘how many times did we play it long in behind without creating a chance? LOTS, what else can we look to do? PLAY SHORT, which areas have we been creating space in well? WIDE AREAS, so where are we looking to play to now and how? PLAY SHORT AND WIDE.It is important that an individual feels valued by the players, the coaches and the team as a whole. Utilising some or all of these techniques can help to achieve this.

**METHODOLOGY**

Twenty (20) football players each from all three levels that is Intervarsity, intercollege and district players’ level, were chosen as the subjects for this study. The age of the subjects was range between 18-34 years. To assess Group Cohesion at three different levels, Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) by Brawley and Widmeyer questionnaire was used. The scores were obtained from Group Environment Questionnaire of football players during the tournament at their respected levels of study in the year 2012. For testing the significance differences among the three levels F-Test (Analysis of Variance) were applied to obtain scores, the level of significant was set at 0.05
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table - I
Analysis of variance among Intervarsity, intercollege and district football players in Group Cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Mean Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Group</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>1.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Group</td>
<td>1284.3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from table - I that the value of cal(f .05) is 1.438 and the value of tab (f .05) is 3.15. It is clearly evident that the cal f .05 is less than tab f .05. Therefore there is no significant difference found among the means of all three groups. As per the norms available in the questionnaire the mean value of the three levels indicates that all the football players perform in the competition as a cohesive unit.

CONCLUSIONS

As per the findings there was no significant difference found in group cohesion among all three different levels of football.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In team cohesion analysis of data, it was also revealed that no significance differences among football players in all the four dimensions of team cohesion. In the dimension "Attraction To Group - Task" players of all categories were observed to have good level on ATG-T. This may be attributed to the team coaches that players of these groups are handled very carefully and are being convinced in a proper manner to achieve the group task assigned to them. Goals and objectives of the group may have been very clearly defined by their respective coaches.

In the second dimension Attraction to Group - Social group no differences were observed in all categories. The scores observed indicate the attraction towards higher side of the range which means that players are good in "Attraction to Group - Social". This reflects their healthy interpersonal relationship with their team members and coaching staff. This may be attributed to now a day's football has become a professional sport. Team management is being given ample of time and duration to remain together in coaching camps which develops the friendly behavior among the players. Good coaching skills may have developed the team into a healthy social group. Staying together during training and competition, may have provided opportunities to players to understand each
other in a better way hence players are attracted towards each other effectively in the social dimension.

In group cohesion no differences were observed in all three levels. The scores observed indicate well in cooperation.

On the dimension "Group Integration - Task" scores of players indicated very high mean values which clearly revealed that players are very much integrated together to achieve the task assigned to them. This may be attributed to professional sports of football now a day's provide many opportunities and rewards on one task is achieved, players do not find any other reason to achieve success other than remaining together in group to achieve successes.

On the dimension "Group Integration" the scores are on higher side which suggests player to be good on the dimension of social.

The reason may be the same as once team is selected and group is formed social aspects improves. Many players develop life long relationship through their longer participation in the teams. Hence they all stick together in different and adverse situations.

REFERENCES