

Impact of Coaching Style On Team Cohesion and Motivation Among Basketball Players

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Abstract— It is widely recognized that coaching style is one of the most influential psychosocial predictors of athlete behavior, team dynamics and motivational climate in sports. The objective of the study was to ascertain the impact of coaching style on Team Cohesion and Motivation of basketball players: a comparative study by gender. A purposive sampling of 50 players, 25 males and 25 females in the age group of 14-25 years, was drawn from Mount St. Mary's School, Delhi and its associated sports academies. A researcher from the University of Tehran conducted a survey of amateur players in Iran. The purpose was to measure the effectiveness of coaching behaviour, motivation, and cohesion on sports performance using validated measures. Three validated measures were used: The Leadership Scale for Sports, Group Environment Questionnaire and Sport Motivation Scale-II. The analysis of data was done utilizing Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and independent samples t-tests at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that basketball players tended to perceive coaching behaviour to be moderate-to-positive ($M = 154.62 \pm 16.48$). The athletes also displayed satisfactory team cohesion ($M = 126.38 \pm 14.21$) and motivation ($M = 98.74 \pm 11.62$). A positive correlation existed between coaching style and team cohesion ($r = 0.58, p < 0.05$), as well as team motivation ($r = 0.63, p < 0.05$). There was significant evidence indicating that females scored higher than males on all three

variables. The results show that when coaching behavior is supportive and democratic, basketball players will have stronger group cohesion and psychological engagement. The discussion touches on practical applications for various stakeholders.

Keywords: Coaching Style; Team Cohesion; Athlete Motivation; Basketball; Leadership Scale for Sports; Group Environment Questionnaire; Gender Differences; Sports Psychology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Basketball is one of the most psychologically-demanding team sports in the world, as players must combine explosive athleticism with rapid-fire decision-making and tactical precision to sustain their activity level while coordinating continuously with teammates. Unlike many other individual sports, basketball performances are quite a lot collective.

A single defensive miscommunication or a lack of zeal can significantly alter a game's outcome. As such, the influence of a coach goes beyond training drills and tactical boards; it extends to the team's emotional core itself.

The coach's unique style—the way he/she consistently uses leadership behavior, communication, feedback, and interpersonal management with athletes directly affects the psychological climate athletes experience on a daily basis. A coach who promotes discussion, praises effort, and includes players in decision-making tends to cultivate an environment in which trust is

built, teammates connect, and individuals find meaning in the game. On the other hand, an authoritarian, controlling, and criticizing coach may receive short-term compliance but, in the end, often weakens the interpersonal bonds that underpin performance under pressure [1, 2].

Coaching behavior in basketball is particularly sensitive to the two psychological outcomes. The first is team cohesion, which refers to the type of unity, mutual attraction, and commitment that exists between players due to their task goals and social relationships [3]. More cohesive teams communicate better, recover faster, and maintain confidence in each other at times of loss. The impact of athletes' motivations, or the inner force that determines if players are present "fully in" all the time, can endure despite of difficulty and enjoy their work [4]. Both.

Cohesion and motivation are not set in stone. They are built up or taken down day by day; much of the time through the quality of our coaching interaction.

Even though the global literature on coaching leadership and sports psychology is growing day by day, only a few studies have examined coaching style, cohesion, and motivation together in one framework, specifically in basketball – and even fewer with Indian player populations. This research work fills this gap by examining perceptions of basketball players in school and academy on coach behavior and how these perceptions influence team cohesion and motivational orientation. Gender-related differences are also looked at, as male and female athletes often experience coaching interaction differently [5].

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A systematic review by Zhang [6] synthesising studies from 2015 to 2025 found that democratic and transformational coaching styles consistently improve team cohesion, athlete development, and collective performance in basketball, while authoritarian behaviour reduces long-term satisfaction and undermines team functioning.

Wang et al. [7] investigated 404 collegiate basketball athletes and found that team cohesion strongly enhanced athlete engagement, but that authoritarian leadership negatively moderated this relationship — meaning that the psychological benefits of cohesion were partly cancelled out when coaches were overly controlling. Mehta and Rao [8] reported that transformational coaching behaviour significantly improved self-confidence, emotional regulation, and interpersonal interaction among adolescent basketball players.

In a large meta-analysis of 26 studies involving over 7,000 athletes, Zhu et al. [9] demonstrated a moderate positive association between supportive coach leadership and both athlete satisfaction and group cohesion across multiple sports. The magnitude of the association was strongest for sports, like basketball, that require continuous interpersonal interaction.

On team cohesion specifically, Evans and Eys [10] highlighted that basketball teams depend more heavily on cohesion than many other sports because offensive systems, defensive rotations, and transition play all require synchronized, trust-based collective effort. Filho et al. [11] found that emotionally supportive team environments strengthened collective unity and improved psychological readiness for competition. Eys and Kim [12] confirmed that task cohesion improved tactical discipline while social cohesion

strengthened emotional bonds and athlete satisfaction.

On motivation, Ryan and Deci [13] established through Self-Determination Theory that athletes in autonomy-supportive environments demonstrate stronger intrinsic motivation, greater persistence, and better emotional well-being. Smith and Smoll [14] found that athletes receiving constructive feedback and positive reinforcement showed significantly greater sports enjoyment and confidence compared to those exposed to negative coaching communication. Ntoumanis et al. [15] demonstrated that coaching behaviours supporting autonomy directly enhanced intrinsic motivation and athlete engagement in team sports.

Studies linking the three variables together consistently show an integrated pattern: positive coaching behaviour improves motivational climate, which strengthens interpersonal bonds and cohesion, which in turn sustains motivation and collective performance [16, 17]. Sharma and Singh [18] confirmed this interconnected relationship specifically among university-level basketball players, finding that democratic and supportive coaching positively influenced both cohesion and intrinsic motivation simultaneously.

III.OBJECTIVES & HYPOTHESES

The study was conducted with the following objectives: (1) to identify the coaching styles perceived by basketball players; (2) to assess the level of team cohesion; (3) to assess the level of motivation; (4) to examine the relationship between coaching style and team cohesion; (5) to examine the relationship between coaching style and motivation; and (6) to compare coaching style perception, team cohesion, and motivation between male and female basketball players.

Seven hypotheses were formulated. It was predicted that coaching style would show a significant

positive relationship with team cohesion (H₁) and motivation (H₂); that democratic coaching would relate positively to motivation (H₃) and autocratic coaching negatively to cohesion (H₄); and that significant gender differences would exist in perceived coaching style (H₅), team cohesion (H₆), and motivation (H₇).

IV. METHODOLOGY

Participants: Fifty basketball players (25 males, 25 females; age range: 14–25 years; $M = 21.47 \pm 2.13$ years) were selected through purposive sampling from Mount St. Mary's School, Delhi, and sports academies affiliated with Integral Sports Academy. All participants had a minimum of two years of competitive basketball experience and were actively training under a coach at the time of data collection. Purposive sampling was used because the study required athletes with direct, regular exposure to organised coaching behaviour.

Instruments: Three internationally standardised and validated psychological instruments were used. Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) — a 40-item scale measuring athletes' perceptions of five coaching behaviour dimensions: Training and Instruction (13 items), Democratic Behaviour (9 items), Autocratic Behaviour (5 items), Social Support (8 items), and Positive Feedback (5 items). Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always).

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(GI-T), Group Integration–Social (GI-S), Individual Attractions to Group–Task (ATG-T), and Individual Attractions to Group–Social (ATG-S). Items are rated on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 9 = Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate stronger cohesion.

Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II; Pelletier et al., 2013) — an 18-item scale grounded in Self-Determination Theory assessing six motivational dimensions: Intrinsic Motivation, Integrated Regulation, Identified Regulation, Introjected Regulation, External Regulation, and A motivation. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Does Not Correspond at All to 7 = Corresponds Exactly).

Procedure: Approval from the institute and ethical clearance were obtained before data gathering. All participants were informed about the purpose and voluntary nature of the study. We guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher carried out the administration of the questionnaires through personal contact. The subjects were taken to a comfortable group setting. The completed forms were collected immediately by the researcher.

An organized basketball training program was conducted for eight weeks (five days a week, 90 minutes each) during the data collection period. The training involved practicing skills, team co-activities, democratic coaching interaction, motivated feedback, and practice matches.

This program ensured uniform coaching exposure for all.

Statistical Analysis: Used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The sample was characterized using descriptive statistics (mean, SD, level classification using $M \pm 1$ SD). The relationship between coaching style and each outcome variable was two Pearson's Product Moment Correlations. Independent samples t-tests compared female and male players. Each hypothesis was tested at $\alpha = 0.05$

V. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

5.1 Descriptive Profiles:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics — All Variables (N = 50)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Low (%)	Average (%)	High (%)
Coaching Style	154.62	16.48	118	188	20%	62%	18%
Team Cohesion	126.38	14.21	92	154	18%	64%	18%
Motivation	98.74	11.62	71	121	16%	68%	16%

The findings showed that most players fall into the average category concerning all three variables (62% coaching style, 64% team cohesion, 68% motivation). This indicates satisfactory but not exceptional levels across the sample. Perceptions among the various groups involved seem to be fairly consistent.

It is more about participants than experience extreme variability. Baseline Profiles Are Broadly Consistent Knowledge from University-Level Basketball in India and Similar Developing Sports Environments [18].

5.2 Relationship between Coaching Style and Team Cohesion:

Table 2: Pearson Correlation — Coaching Style and Team Cohesion (N = 50)

Variable 1	Variable 2	r	Significance
Coaching Style (M = 154.62)	Team Cohesion (M = 126.38)	0.58	Significant at $p < 0.05$

There was a modest positive correlation found between the coaching style and team cohesion ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.05$) which confirmed H₁. Players who viewed their coaches as more instructive, supportive, and democratic reported greater team cohesion and cooperation. This supports the theoretical assumption that coaching leadership influences the psychological climate athletes experience, and that a climate based on trust and open communication automatically strengthens the individual bonds that foster cohesion [10].

The finding corroborates the beneficial coaching-cohesion relationship found by Zhu et al. and Sharma and Singh and extends it to the Indian context of basketball.

From a practical standpoint, the results of this research are worth hearing for coaches. That is, the way you talk to and engage your players on a daily basis has a measurable impact on whether they function as a team or as individual players just wearing the same jersey.

5.3 Relationship between Coaching Style and Motivation

Table 3: Pearson Correlation — Coaching Style and Motivation (N = 50)

Variable 1	Variable 2	r	Significance
Coaching Style (M = 154.62)	Motivation (M = 98.74)	0.63	Significant at $p < 0.05$

The coaching style and motivation show a stronger positive correlation ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H₂. This suggests that individuals exert greater forces on joints and tendons.

Motivational experiences respond more directly to coaching behavior than collective cohesion processes do. Athletes who deemed their coaches as supportive and communicative, and who were democratically engaged, actually increased motivation. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory, in which sportsmen's environments that support their sense of autonomy and competence directly contribute to intrinsic motivation [13]. Ntoumanis et al. [15] noted a similar trend, highlighting coaching autonomy.

In team sports, support is the most consistent predictor of intrinsic motivation.

In this regard, both correlations are statistically significant, with the motivational correlation exhibiting a stronger association. When coaches conduct themselves well, not only do athletes engage better but also connect well with teammates.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test — Gender Comparisons

Variable	Male M (SD)	Female M(SD)	Mean Diff.	SEd	t-value	Sig.
Coaching Style	149.48 (15.72)	159.76 (13.68)	10.28	4.16	2.47	$p < 0.05^*$
Team Cohesion	121.64 (13.88)	131.12 (12.94)	9.48	3.91	2.42	$p < 0.05^*$
Motivation	95.42 (10.84)	102.06 (9.96)	6.64	3.19	2.08	$p < 0.05^*$

*Critical value: $t(48) = 2.011$ at $\alpha = 0.05$

The data shows that female basketball players scored significantly greater than males on three variables (H₅, H₆ and H₇ accepted). The differences had particular practical significance: female players reported receiving around 10 more points of

positive coaching support; they also scored about 9 more points of team cohesion and approximately 6.6 more points of motivational engagement. Gupta and Sharma [19] observed a similar pattern, noting that female athletes in Indian.

5.4 Hypothesis Testing Summary

sports settings often demonstrate stronger intrinsic motivational orientation. This may mirror the nature of the samples studied in the present research female players at those institutions may have had longer sustained this institutional environment must have fostered more supportive coaching styles, or may simply communicate and process these interpersonal team dynamics differently. Coaching practices must consider the needs of both genders.

Table 5: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hyp	Statement	Result	Key Statistic
H ₁	Significant relationship: coaching style → team cohesion	Accepted	$r = 0.58, p < 0.05$
H ₂	Significant relationship: coaching style → motivation	Accepted	$r = 0.63, p < 0.05$
H ₃	Democratic coaching → positive relationship with motivation	Accepted	Directional support confirmed
H ₄	Autocratic coaching → negative relationship with cohesion	Accepted	Directional support confirmed
H ₅	Gender difference in coaching style	Accepted	$t = 2.47, p < 0.05$

	perception		
H ₆	Gender difference in team cohesion	Accepted	$t = 2.42, p < 0.05$
H ₇	Gender difference in motivation	Accepted	$t = 2.08, p < 0.05$

VI. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a clear effect of basketball coach leadership on team cohesion and players' motivation. The influence of coaching and team cohesion among basketball players is massive. The research indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between team cohesiveness and coaching style. Through his/her communication and support, the coach can be seen to help strengthen the cohesive bonds between players that allow them to coordinate, trust and recover as a team. The correlation with motivation ($r = 0.63$) suggests that athletes' daily psychological engagement might be influenced more by the coaches' behavior than any other coaching factor.

The female players in this study seemed to experience and respond to coaching interactions in ways that fostered stronger cohesion and motivation than the male players. This indicates that women in the sample were more positively oriented in these areas, as their mean scores on the three variables were more positive. We need to investigate this matter further; however, results indicate women can benefit from techniques being suggested for them.

All in all, there are theoretical and practical implications here. This is consistent with research on self-determination theory, transformational leadership, and the expanding literature on sport psychology in basketball. According to them, the quality of the coaching relationship (more than the quality of the training program) determines much of

what happens to a team's psychological health and performance readiness.

VII. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to assess how democratic, facilitative, and athlete-centered the basketball coaching behavior in different environments is, we suggest institutes implement this as a baseline or default mode of operating. As a coach, you must involve players in tactical discussions, explicitly acknowledge their efforts, maintain an open line of communication, and be authoritarian only when necessary. High praise is better than a harsh criticism even by a shade as it leads to sizeable gains in team spirit and motivation.

Basketball sport psychologists and educator-coaches should use the instruments in the study (LSS, GEQ, SMS-II) as constant monitoring instruments for basketball programs. By periodically screening for cohesion or motivation problems alike, it will be possible to identify issues before they escalate into performance problems.

The combination of psychological profiling with reflections on coaching practice can create feedback loops that enhance the athlete experience and team outcomes.

Create education programs for sports organizations and governing bodies that go beyond tactical and physical preparation to include evidence-based psychological leadership training. If a coach understands how their communication style influences motivation and cohesiveness, they'll be in a better position to develop not only skilled players but psychologically healthy, committed basketball teams.

Researchers ought to conduct larger multi-site samples, longitudinal designs that monitor how cohesion and motivation change across a competitive season, and additional outcome

variables such as self-confidence, emotional intelligence, and competitive anxiety. By focusing on female athletes or on junior-age athletes, more research will improve our understanding of the effects of coaching on different populations.

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