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## ORIGINAL

# ROLE OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY IN ENHANCING TEAM COHESION IN PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL

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### ABSTRACT

This research analyzes how professional basketball teams work with sports psychology to improve team unity. This study examines which mental strategies benefit people both as individuals and as teams in basketball. Through sports psychology players solve emotional and mental pressure while gaining stronger minds that stay focused and confident under any stress. Through methods like goal setting, relaxation practice, and team communication training this research shows how to help players establish better trust and teamwork while solving conflicts among them. The article promotes sports psychology practice because it builds strong teams that lead to excellent results and stable achievements in professional basketball. Sports psychology helps professional basketball teams build stronger bonds by working to improve players' emotional and mental skills in how they perform and work together. Professional basketball creates severe stress for players who struggle to perform well under that pressure and it lowers team performance across the board. Sports psychologists teach players effective methods to handle difficult moments so they build stronger relationships with teammates. Good teamwork creates better court results and lets players deal with challenges while working toward team goals while creating strong connections with teammates. Sports psychology methods increase team results while developing an atmosphere where everyone works together productively

**KEYWORDS:** Sports Psychology (SP), Enhancing Team Cohesion (ETC), Professional Basketball (PB)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The word sport psychology refers to a special branch of psychology in

which we have to focus on those aspects of sports that are related to emotions. In this branch, we also study those important factors that may lead to athlete participation, effective performance, and well-being in sports as well. The other important term is team cohesion which can be described as a special mutual bond among team members. Now we are going to understand that what is main role of sports psychology related to team cohesion in basketball. When we study sports psychology, we mainly focus on some important aspects related to athletes. The first important aspect is performance enhancement. The main aim of sports psychology is to understand the emotions of athletes and mold them in such a way that the performance of athletes becomes better(Gardner, 2001). The other main aspect of sports psychology is the mental health of athletes. As we know for the effective performance of athletes, there is a need for betterment in physical and mental health as well so sports psychology focuses on the improvement of the mental health of athletes as well. The other main aspect of sports psychology is team dynamics which we are going to discuss here mainly. Basketball is a high-intensity game that demands highly skilled and cooperative team members for better performance(Shi, 2024). The level of cooperation within the team is dependent upon the aspect of team cohesion. After understanding sports psychology, we came to know to this fact that when there is team cohesion, there will be many important benefits. There are some important ways by which sports psychology can be utilized to enhance team cohesion in basketball. The first important and effective way to utilize sports psychology for team cohesion is open communication. As we know the success of the team is dependent upon understanding within the team and this understanding can only be developed by effective and open communication(Abadi, 2023). We must design such ways and means by which team members may learn the aspects of open communication so that they can easily develop understanding among themselves. When there is a better understanding within the team, it will lead to team cohesion in basketball. Secondly, we should arrange scheduled workshops for team members and these workshops should be hosted by sports psychologists. These sports psychologists must try to make team members understand the importance of team cohesion for success. Sport psychologists must tell them how to develop a relationship of trust with one another so they these team members may learn to cooperate among themselves(Asamoah, 2013). Thirdly, we should say that the main aim of sports psychology is to develop and improve the emotional intelligence of team members. It is pathetic to say that we everything talk about the intelligence quotient and we rarely talk about the emotional quotient. The ability to understand own emotions, and others' emotions and to regulate them is termed emotional intelligence(Marcos, Miguel, Oliva, & Calvo, 2010). Sometimes team members may belong to different countries or different religions, so there lies any point of difference among them. In this regard, sometimes they may hurt the emotions of others which is the main cause of misunderstanding among team members. However, developing and improving

the emotional intelligence of team members will make them learn to respect the emotions of others which will also lead to team cohesion in basketball. Moreover, it is the sole role of sports psychologists to set common goals for team members. When there are common goals, there will be better cooperation among team members to attain that particular goal, in this way, there will be better fostering of team cohesion in basketball(Wang, Xu, & Liu, 2024). Recent studies have shown that sports psychologists must arrange some events or outings for team members only. In this way, there will be more interaction and communication among team members which will work for developing team cohesion as well. It has also been seen that in those teams in which each team member feels a sense of identity and importance in the team, he will turn into a loyal team member. So we should provide such an environment to team members in which they feel that they are equally important for success(Muthiane, Rintaugu, & Mwisukha, 2015). We have observed from recent experiments that those teams who celebrate their milestones and success are mostly more cohesive teams than others. We can say that those teams in which there is an aspect of transparency, work well and long-lasting as compared to those teams in which there is prejudice and favoritism. This aspect of transparency will help to foster trust among team members. Sometimes if there is any conflict within the team, the sports psychologists must evaluate the conflict and make team members understand that they have to resolve this conflict among themselves by communication(Miçooğulları, 2013). In other words, we can say that it is also part of emotional intelligence to resolve conflict by active listening and communication. Recent studies have convinced us that there are many important benefits of team cohesion in basketball. The first and foremost benefit is the aspect of improved performance. As we know basketball is team team-based game and overall performance will be better when each team member performs well. When there is better team cohesion, there will be a prominent improvement in the performance of the whole team. The other important benefit of team cohesion is an aspect of increased motivation. Motivation is mandatory for achieving desired goals(Heuzé, Raimbault, & Fontayne, 2006). Better team cohesion will motivate each team member which will make them eager and enthusiastic to achieve positive outcomes in the form of success. Moreover, we can say that when there is a better status of team cohesion, there is the enhancement of players' satisfaction. When there is mental satisfaction in players, they will cooperate in each aspect of team membership. It has also been seen that better team cohesion will lead to less conflict which will save time and energy of team members for better performance in competition. Although team cohesion has many benefits there are some important challenges to it. The first important challenge is interpersonal conflicts such as conflicts related to personality clashes, lack of communication, and trust issues. All these conflicts will result in poor status of team cohesion in basketball. The cultural, language, and diversity issues may also act as important challenges for team cohesion(Tran, 2024; Zejin, 2024).

## 1.1. Research Objective

The main objective of this research is to discuss the roles of sports psychology in enhancing team cohesion in professional basketball. These studies have effectively explained about various benefits of team cohesion and important challenges to team cohesion as well.

## 2. Literature Review

During recent years, we came to know an important aspect of sports psychology which made this aspect more highlighted in recent years. This aspect convinced us that there is a need to understand a few important considerations related to the psychology of athletes because it is important for better performance not only in basketball but also in other sports as well. It is a prerequisite to understand sports psychology in basketball because this game is mainly a group sport. So, we need to enhance the aspect of team cohesion by understanding sports psychology. Team cohesion in simple words we can say that it is understanding within the team which is a crucial factor for success related to basketball(von Stietz). When we understand sports psychology, we enhance the aspects of communication, trust, motivation, and others for the betterment of team cohesion. There are a few important theories related to team cohesion that are necessary to understand and discuss here. The first important theory is called social identity theory(Eys & Kim, 2017). This theory mainly reflects that every individual of a group has a sense of Identity and he wants to be highlighted in the case of group membership. So, the main role of a sport psychologist is that he has to promote shared identity and a Sense of belonging among team members because it will lead to betterment fostering of team cohesion. The other most important theory related to team cohesion is named as cohesion performance relationship(Brisimis, Bebetos, & Krommidas, 2018). As we know communication is the key to understanding so when there is effective communication, there is betterment in the aspect of team cohesion as well. The other dynamic is that mutual support and cooperation are mandatory for fostering team cohesion because team cohesion is Feedback as we can say is the backbone of any desired objectives. So feedback is mandatory for enhancing performance of team members as well(Boyle, 2003). It is the role of a sport psychologist to give regular feedback on the performance of each team member so every team member may learn to foster team cohesion for the betterment of performance. The next important strategy for team cohesion is in terms of the emotional intelligence of team members. As we know medical studies proved that there are two main types of intelligence and emotional intelligence is one of them(Yukelson, Weinberg, & Jackson, 1984). The word emotional intelligence means the ability to understand own emotions, to regulate these emotions, and to understand the emotions of others as well. As we know it is not necessary to win in each competition. In some cases, team members have to confront failure as well so there is a need to

regulate such emotions as well. When sports psychologists train team members in such a way that they will learn to respect the emotions of others, so there will be enhanced team cohesion within the basketball team directly related to team performance. When there is better understanding among team members, there will be effective performance as well (Gardner, 2001). Some important strategies need to be implemented for better team cohesion in basketball. The first important strategy is related to team-building activities. It is the sole role of sports psychologists to arrange such team-building activities which may promote communication, trust, and understanding among team members. For example, some sort of community service projects may help in fostering team cohesion in basketball teams (Shi, 2024). The second most important strategy for team cohesion is communication skills training. These trainings are aimed to enhance communication skills of team members which will promote understanding within the team. Some communication skills such as active listening, conflict resolution, and others are mandatory for developing friendly behavior within the team. In case of any conflict, when there are better communication skills in the team, there will be better outcomes in the form of resolution of conflict. The other most important strategy for team cohesion in basketball is goal setting (Abadi, 2023). We can say that goal is the ultimate motivation for any team member. So, there is a stringent need to set team goals so that every team member may strive to achieve the desired goal. Such efforts will also be useful for fostering and promoting team cohesion. Some important outcomes have been seen as a result of the implementation of these strategies. The first important outcome is the aspect of boosted morale. When players work in a cohesive team, they will have high morale, job satisfaction, and a sense of motivation as well. The other most important outcome related to the implementation of team cohesion strategies is reduced conflict (Asamoah, 2013). Usually, a conflict arises when there is less understanding of the point of view of each other. However, when each team member learns about the resolution of conflict, there will be less risk of conflict within the team. The next most important outcome is related to an increased sense of belonging. As human beings, we cannot deny that we prefer to have a sense of identity and belonging for better performance. When each team member has a sense of belonging, this aspect will eventually enhance commitment, loyalty, and respect within the team (Marcos et al., 2010). Some important outcomes are seen on organizational and social levels as a result of the implementation of these team cohesion strategies. The first important organizational outcome is better team dynamics. When all players are supportive, encouraging, and most importantly respectful, there will be an enhancement in the performance of the whole team. The reputation of any team is important to much extent for the satisfaction of team members (Wang et al., 2024). When there is a good reputation for the team, it will encourage team members for effective performance. The overall reputation of the team is also enhanced by the implementation of these team cohesion strategies. Along with these short-term impacts, there are some long-

term impacts of the implementation of these team cohesion strategies. The most important long-term impact is the aspect of sustained success(Muthiane et al., 2015). When team members are fully adapted to the provided environment and can cope with challenges, they will pacify their way toward sustained success(Heuzé et al., 2006; Miçooğulları, 2013). The other important long-term impact is that there is more player retention in this case. It is because of team cohesion which make team members more loyal and committed to objectives so there is less rate of turnover in this case. It will become a kind of example for future generations and other players are well(Zejin, 2024).



Figure 1: Mental Resilience Training

### 3. Applications of Role of Sports Psychology in Enhancing Team Cohesion in Professional Basketball.

Many different ways use sports psychology to make teams work better in professional basketball. Below are some of the key applications:

#### 3.1. Mental Resilience Training

Sports psychologists help players build emotional resistance through strategies that help them face game and practice disruptions effectively (Figure 1). A strong team will face the most intense moments together because mental stamina supports their unity. Mental resilience training helps people develop methods to succeed through tough times while dealing with stress and challenging situations. This instruction helps people bounce back faster from challenges while keeping a favorable mindset and performing well under heavy demands. The program includes proven methods including mindfulness training and cognitive-behavioral approaches combined with stress relief methods. People in this program understand how to think differently about problems while managing emotions better and finding practical solutions.

Mental resilience training develops our understanding of ourselves by enhancing emotional skills and creating healthy habits including physical movement and proper rest and diet. When coaching people to become mentally resilient they learn to hold steady and function effectively in high-stress situations both at work and at home during emergencies. People and organizations both prioritize its benefits especially in challenging sectors such as nursing, teaching, military service and business leadership. By following a regular training schedule, you establish mental health defenses that boost your output and make life better.



**Figure 2:** Team Building Exercises

### **3.2. Team Building Exercises**

Psychologists organize sport teamwork training that makes players better at talking together and depends on reliable partnerships. Team-building activities let players recognize themselves in others and develop personal bonds that improve teamwork performance (Figure 2). Team building activities offer organized platforms that let teams work better together through shared understanding and mutual trust. These teamwork activities help people develop better personal connections while solving problems and uniting their group members. The exercises demand active participation through diverse tasks including team problem solving, behaviors that build trust and fun-filled collaborative projects. Team building exercises show team members what skills each person brings to the team so everyone values their differences. Organizations can create team building activities that match their objectives to help communication improve or solve teamwork problems while increasing team spirit. When teams tackle outdoor tasks or do escape rooms followed by team workshops they learn to respect and depend on one another to reach their objectives. Group activities develop better leaders and team members plus they create stronger bonds among all team members. Team building activities build collaborative work patterns between employees that improve productivity and establish stronger bonds across the entire workplace.

### **3.3. Goal Setting**

Players perform better when their leader and team leader agree on measurable goals that everyone strives to reach. Through goal setting and motivation techniques sports psychologists help players work better together towards their shared team and personal objectives. A clear path to success comes from establishing SMART targets which describe precisely what needs to be done and gives direction when setting your goals. The plan acts as a direct path to show teams or individuals where to put their work while letting them notice their success path towards targets. When we set specific goals, we become better at organizing our work while making better use of available resources plus staying focused because of the feeling of success. With specific tasks people become more active and responsible about their work since they know what they have to do. The process of setting proper goals works better when you divide big tasks into smaller actions that seem easier to reach. You need to look at your goals often and make changes when your personal or work situation changes. When you put your targets in writing and show them to others it strengthens your dedication and raises your chances of success. People use goal setting to achieve their life and work targets no matter what they want to achieve from their personal growth to their professional development. When individuals and teams focus on their most important goals, they can take clear steps to make their dreams happen in real life.

### **3.4. Conflict Resolution**

Every team encounters trials so sports psychologists help players deal with performance-related disagreements. Through conversations they establish trust between team members and steer problems toward positive solutions that keep the team unified. Teams solve their differences in a positive and efficient way through conflict resolution. This process makes you discover what starts conflicts then learns about each side's thoughts before creating solutions that improve everyone's situation. To solve conflicts well you need good communication methods plus the ability to really listen to others and sense how they feel plus staying steady during high-stakes moments. People need effective communication skills to build relationships at work and within teams no matter what setting they work in. Conflict resolution techniques usually take the form of negotiation and mediation plus collaboration since parties must partner to identify beneficial outcomes for everyone involved. By changing how we look at problems and keeping our emotions apart we can control conflict and understand each other better. When conflicts require professional help parties bring in an unbiased third party to lead the resolution. When people solve conflicts well, they rebuild trust and make stronger relationships alongside developing better problem-solving skills. Teams and individuals who deal with conflicts in a respectful way promote open dialogue and shared responsibility which enhances both work results and team member happiness.



### 3.5. Visualization and Imagery Techniques

Sports psychologists use mental imagery to teach their players how to see clear pictures of their winning plays in their minds. Players build confidence as the method lets them picture future tactics and helps their team work together better. Imagining and seeing tasks ahead of time helps players focus better while strengthening their self-assurance and performs well. By using brain simulation techniques individuals can mentally train for challenges and picture their future triumph ahead of time. People in sports training and business along with self-improvement use visualization by forming clear mental pictures of their target results like delivering flawless presentations successfully achieving private targets or outperforming during difficult moments. Research proves that people develop better skills and greater self-assurance when they picture tasks in their minds since brain activity during visualization matches what really happens. Visualizing processes incorporates sight, sound, touch, and emotion to design memories that strongly impact your mind. Professional athletes picture their sport moves mentally before they start practice. Simultaneously professionals rehearse vital interactions and prepare for critical choices through visualization. Regular visualization exercises create positive psychology while strengthening your mind and confidence as they help you handle anxiety better plus solve problems easier. When you pair visualization with awareness practices and goal setting methods you create an even better path to both work and life success. When people learn to prioritize success while handling challenges, they gain the ability to achieve peak performance.



Figure 3: Emotional Regulation

### 3.6. Emotional Regulation

A team needs emotional management to create and sustain a positive

workplace atmosphere (Figure 3). Sports psychologists teach players how to use mindfulness and breathing techniques alongside mental adjustment methods to keep themselves on target with team objectives even while managing emotions. Emotional regulation means you manage your emotions effectively when dealing with hard times or stress. You need to sense your emotions accurately then employ suitable methods to handle them properly. People need this skill to keep their emotions stable while lowering their uncontrollable behaviors and building mental strength at work and home. An individual who can control their emotions stays steady during stressful times deals with conflict through adulthood and thinks clearly instead of reacting to emotions. People use mindfulness deep breathing and thought rebuilding methods to slow down and rethink their feelings during intense emotions. You must spot your emotions behind a situation combined with self-knowledge to treat situations with care instead of reacting quickly. Continuous emotional regulation builds emotional intelligence skills needed to create strong connections and leads to better communication and compassionate leadership. Learning to control emotions helps people handle tough moments better while lowering stress levels which helps them achieve better results every day. The ability to control emotions helps people stay in control across life situations and builds up their mental and emotional fitness over time.

### **3.7. Effective Communication**

An effective team depends on clear team communication. Sports psychologists help players develop better ways to speak and show feelings with their teammates to create open and positive exchanges before and during matches. You need to pass information and emotions in a direct and polite way so everyone can understand you. Good communication skills help everyone connect with others to handle issues while teaming up efficiently. When we communicate well, we both talk and listen while studying the body language of others plus making our message right for the audience. Your ability to express ideas clearly through conversations and public talks determines if people grasp your message and respond properly. Successful communication needs people to present their message clearly while understanding others and speaking with belief. By being clear in communication, the message stays direct while empathy helps us grasp psychological states of our listeners. When you speak with self-assurance and courtesy you earn people's faith and respect. Open-ended questions and feedback as well as restating information improve how team members talk to each other. Dates help you understand how people express themselves through their tone body language and cultural norms especially when you work with different nationalities. Effective communication that allows open idea sharing helps build better relationships and work performance while preventing misinterpretations across all social settings.



**Figure 4:** Building Leadership

### **3.8. Building Leadership**

Sports psychologists find leadership potential in players so they can guide and support their teammates as leaders. Good leadership brings teams together because it helps the team stay focused on shared goals and keeps team members responsible for their tasks (Figure 4). Leadership building brings out an individual's ability to lead others successfully through natural growth processes. Great leadership is more than task supervision - it involves helping teams work together better while giving members power and making a teamwork goal everyone agrees on. Strong leaders need to show integrity and emotional understanding while making steady choices and responding well to change to build team trust during hard times. Leadership growth continues throughout one's life through inner review plus learning from past events coupled with skill training for handling present and future challenges. A leader builds skills in crucial areas such as talking openly while planning ahead, understanding personal emotions, and fixing team disagreements. Top leaders use communication skills to explain their plans to their team members while driving them toward better performance. Through their strategic decisions they plan actions that will support organization goals. No leaders understand emotions better than themselves and others helping them create strong connections through emotional intelligence. Leadership development requires training relationships, connecting with others and choosing demanding tasks to help people step beyond familiar territory. Through meaningful feedback and positive mindset development aspiring leaders improve their abilities and win people's support. What makes a company successful touches people's lives in a positive way while helping them reach their highest achievements.

### **3.9. Focus on Team Culture**

Through their methods sport's psychologists create teams that honor respect acceptance and united efforts. The team environment shapes player

connections that improve unity and boosts their results. A team culture strategy drives successful collaboration and respect between team members toward better team performance. Team culture describes the group's shared ways of thinking, behaving, feeling, and doing things when members work together. When team culture stays positive members trust each other more which leads to cultural inclusion plus they communicate better making everyone feel valued as they give their full capabilities. It lays the groundwork for genuinely connected teams who produce more and succeed longer. A strong team culture begins when leaders explain to all team members their shared mission targets and beliefs. Leaders' examples show employees how they want them to act while simultaneously establishing the fundamentals of responsible open communication and respectful behavior. When organizations and teams show appreciation for successful moments, they build stronger team bonds and develop a common connection. A successful team culture depends on when leaders welcome feedback while creating equal opportunities for everyone and use appropriate methods to solve disagreements. Team members work together better when they know their opinions matter and their help makes a difference in results. Inside a supportive and dynamic team environment everyone including the team achieves their highest possible results.

### **3.10. Reducing Anxiety and Stress**

Alongside these factors high stress prevents teams from working at their peak abilities and causes pain between them. Sports psychologists assist players in staying connected and focused through stress management programs which include relaxation training steps plus self-help tactics. Your mental, emotional, physical well-being relies on controlling anxiousness and stress levels especially since life moves quickly today. When you handle pressure better you need to see what stresses you and learn good response habits while living a healthy life. Regular practice of mindfulness relaxation deep breathing progressive muscle exercises lower physical stress symptoms including elevated heart rate and shallow breathing. The methods create feelings of being in charge of your actions which helps you deal with difficult moments better. Regular physical exercise lowers stress because it triggers the release of endorphins which boost your moods. Being well-rested plus eating right and drinking enough water strengthen your body's ability to handle tension. The proper allocation of time into essential jobs helps people avoid being overwhelmed so they can concentrate on what needs attention first. When life challenges become hard keeping up with our strong social ties and confiding in close people can help us feel better and gain fresh perspectives.

## **4. Conclusion**

After an overview of these important studies related to the role of sports psychology in enhancing team cohesion in basketball, we may come to this

point that sports psychology is a prerequisite for bringing positive changes in teams. It will help to foster team cohesion which will yield useful and long-lasting outcomes. Sports psychology brings essential benefits that improve team harmony in professional basketball leagues. When sports psychologists take care of their players' mental and emotional health, they create better performance results plus build strong team connections through open dialogue. Through goal setting methods teams learn to manage pressure while working together and staying focused on their common team goals. By embedding sports psychology methods in training and matches teams become stronger and experience better results as members work together toward common team aims. When people actively control their stress and anxiety, they gain better control over their thoughts and actions while seeing problems with a more positive frame. Repeatedly practicing these methods calms down stress today and prepares us to handle life's challenges better tomorrow. Sports psychology helps basketball professionals perform better while building teamwork that strengthens their entire team. A team's best performance depends on sports psychology techniques that help players think better while building effective team communication and controlling their emotions. Psychologists teach athletes to perform better through mental preparation activities like setting goals and managing emotions using relaxation and silent observation. The practice of sports psychology helps teams develop effective communication while building trust and resolving problems which keeps their team united.

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