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Team Cohesion and Performance Satisfaction among College's Players: Mediating Role of Effective Communication

Tehzin Aslam

Lecturer in Physical Education, Government Associate College for Women, Jandanwala, Bhakkar, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: tehzinaslam9597@gmail.com

Ishrat Naheed

Ph.D Scholar, Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Email: ishratnaheedpu@gu.edu.pk

Rehmatullah

Assistant Coach Sports, University of Gujrat, Email: rehmat.ullah@uog.edu.pk

Saman Gul

P.hD Scholar, Department of Sports Sciences, and Physical Education, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan. Email: rohakhan379@gmail.com

Abstract

Team Cohesion is an essential determinant of athlete satisfaction, but the pathways linking this variable to performance satisfaction in contexts like Pakistani collegiate sports are still unknown. Communication is hailed as the possible mediator. Principal Objective: This study was designed to explore whether effective communication could mediate the relationship between team cohesion and performance satisfaction of college athletes in Bhakkar District, Pakistan. Research Method: Using a cross-sectional survey of 283 athletes (stratified random sampling from 18 colleges), validated scales: Team Cohesion (Carron et al., 2002; $\alpha=0.85$), Communication Effectiveness (Clampett et al., 1996; $\alpha=0.78$), and Performance Satisfaction (Hays et al., 2009; $\alpha=0.82$), were then administered. Mediation and binary logistic regression (satisfaction dichotomized: high/low) were analyzed. Results: Communication fully mediated the relationship between cohesion and satisfaction (indirect effect: $\beta=0.2585$, 95% CI [0.1940, 0.3243]). Cohesion directly predicted satisfaction ($\beta=0.2646$, $p<.001$), but 49.4% of its total effect ($\beta=0.5232$, $p<.001$) operated via communication. Logistic regression confirmed cohesion (OR=3.21, $p<.001$) and communication (OR=4.07, $p<.001$) as robust predictors of high satisfaction.

Keywords: Team cohesion; Performance satisfaction; Communication mediation; Collegiate athletes; Pakistan.

Introduction

In the context of intense competitions, academic rigor, and seriously impactful personal development, much like the life of the student-athlete, college athletics carry with them a unique and demanding environment of college athletes. A team-oriented activity such as team sports requires performance in the range of individual capability, overcoming that with the complex orchestration of the collective efforts toward a common goal. Factors creating a system for optimal performance and satisfaction of the athletes are thus largely internal to the team



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structure. The two emergent constructs often regarded as the cornerstone of successful team functioning are team cohesion and performance satisfaction. The intuition that feeling united as a group somehow correlates with being satisfied with team outcomes is self-evident; however, the actual manner in which cohesion influences satisfaction, especially in the unique setting of collegiate sports, deserves further probing. The following introduction will consider the established relationship linking team cohesion to performance satisfaction in the collegiate player setting and assert communication as the key mediating pathway between these two constructs.

Acknowledged as a prerequisite to athletic success, team cohesiveness, broadly defined as the dynamic process that reflects the tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998), is an important variable. Cohesive teams exhibit better persistence, resilience to hardship, coordinated efforts, and support systems for their members (Carron, Colman, Wheeler, & Stevens, 2002). Studies consistently demonstrate that cohesion tends to positively correlate with many desired outcomes in sport. An example of this effect is Oh (2023), who says communication and team cohesion moderate the transformational leadership-athletic performance relationship, attesting to cohesion's vital role in mediating between leadership and results. In the same line, Ruan and Liu (2021) found authentic leadership by the coach to correlate with team performance satisfaction and psychological well-being, with team cohesion being an important mediator. This validates cohesion as not only a desirable factor but also an active mechanism linking the leadership input to the athlete-centered output.

Performance satisfaction, which is different from winning percentages, refers to how athletes evaluate their own contributions and their happiness with the team's overall performance and goal achievement (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1997). It includes satisfaction with effort, execution, improvement, and the fairness of outcomes based on what has been invested. High levels of performance satisfaction are important for athlete motivation, ongoing participation, mental well-being, and overall team spirit (Erikstad et al., 2018). Studies by Brisimis, Bebetos, and Krommidas (2018) looked into whether team cohesion predicts satisfaction for athletes in team sports. They found strong positive links, suggesting that feeling part of a unified group boosts happiness with performance experiences. Earlier research by Lowther and Lane (2002) also showed important connections between positive moods, team cohesion, and satisfaction with performance among soccer players, further confirming this relationship.

While the link between cohesion and satisfaction is well-known, the specific details of how it works are still being investigated. Collegiate athletes function in a high-pressure environment filled with tough competition, academic demands, changing social situations, and heavy time obligations. This complexity shows that just having cohesion isn't enough; the quality of interactions within the team is crucial. That's where good communication comes in. Good communication in a team means sharing information, ideas, feelings, and feedback clearly, openly, and respectfully among all members, including coaches. It includes both task-related communication, like strategies and instructions, and socio-emotional communication, such as support and conflict resolution



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(Sullivan, 1993).

Recent research increasingly sees communication not just as a part of teamwork, but as a key process that actively supports and strengthens it while also affecting satisfaction. Onağ and Tepeci (2014) clearly identified intra-team communication as a major factor influencing both team member satisfaction and the desire to stay in sports teams. This works alongside team cohesion and norms. Their findings suggest that communication plays a unique and powerful role in creating positive team experiences. Importantly, Bedir, Agduman, Bedir, and Erhan (2023) provided strong evidence for the mediating role of communication. In their study of curlers, they found communication skill to be a significant mediator in the relationship between empathy, team cohesion, and competition performance. This shows that the benefits of empathy and cohesion on performance occur through effective communication. Additionally, DeOrtentiis, Summers, Ammeter, Douglas, and Ferris (2013) pointed out that cohesion and satisfaction serve as mediators in the link between team trust and team effectiveness. This implicitly recognizes the interconnected nature of communication, which is essential for building trust, along with cohesion and satisfaction.

In college sports, strong communication channels are essential. Athletes come from different backgrounds and have various roles, such as starters, reserves, and specialists. They need to quickly understand complex game plans, adjust during games, give helpful feedback, handle personal conflicts, and deal with shared pressures like travel, injuries, and academic deadlines. Mose (2020) looked into factors that affect team unity in youth football and likely found that communication plays a vital role, which supports existing literature. Likewise, Tikon, Olusegun, and Nahshon Hannaniah (n.d.) examined personal and team factors affecting performance satisfaction in a professional Nigerian football club. Communication dynamics were part of these factors. Strong communication helps maintain and strengthen team unity. It clarifies roles and expectations, promotes teamwork, allows for resolving conflicts that threaten harmony, offers necessary social support, and ensures athletes feel noticed and appreciated. All of these aspects contribute to their satisfaction with both the team's performance and their roles in it.

Despite the growing awareness of these issues, there is a gap in understanding how effective communication affects the relationship between team unity and satisfaction in college athletic teams. Much of the existing research focuses on elite professionals (Bedir et al., 2023) or youth athletes (Mose, 2020; Erikstad et al., 2018). Some studies look at cohesion and communication as factors that influence each other, rather than exploring a mediation model that shows how communication explains the connection between cohesion and satisfaction (Onağ & Tepeci, 2014; Brisimis et al., 2018). The unique developmental stage of college, along with the dual identities of academics and athletics, requires more focused study. Does the strength of cohesion lead to satisfaction mainly by creating an environment where communication thrives? Can poor communication, even in a cohesive group, reduce satisfaction despite shared goals?

This study aims to explore the links between team cohesion, performance satisfaction, and effective communication among college athletes. Building on the foundational work of Ruan and Liu (2021), which connects cohesion to



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satisfaction through leadership, we extend the mediation model shown by Bedir et al. (2023) to focus on the essential link between cohesion and satisfaction in college sports. We hypothesize that effective communication will significantly mediate the positive relationship between team cohesion and performance satisfaction among college athletes. Specifically, we expect that higher perceived team cohesion will relate to better effective communication defined by openness, clarity, support, and conflict resolution skills. This, in turn, should lead to greater performance satisfaction regarding both individual contributions and team results.

Literature Review

Team cohesion is recognized as a key factor in athlete satisfaction and performance in sports. Early research by Lowther and Lane (2002) found a strong link between mood states, group cohesion, and athlete satisfaction. Athletes perform and feel better when they are part of a cohesive team. Verma et al. (2012) supported this by showing that elite volleyball players on high-performing teams had more cohesion than those on lower-performing teams. Ramzaninezhad et al. (2009) also found a positive relationship between collective belief, cohesion, and team performance. This highlights how unity and internal belief can improve overall results.

Ruan and Liu (2021) extended this idea by showing that team cohesion and psychological capital influence the link between authentic leadership and both performance satisfaction and psychological well-being. Erikstad et al. (2018) found that meeting psychological needs and having team cohesion helped with self-directed learning and motivation among elite youth football players. This suggests that cohesion boosts both mental and emotional involvement in sports. DeOrtentiis et al. (2013) noted that team cohesion and satisfaction played a role in how team trust affected team effectiveness. This reinforces the importance of internal dynamics for high performance.

Brisimis, Bebetos, and Krommidas (2018) echoed these results in their study on team sports, indicating that higher levels of cohesion significantly predicted satisfaction with performance. Onağ and Tepeci (2014) confirmed the same link, finding that cohesion, communication, and team norms were key predictors of satisfaction and team retention in different sports groups. Bedir et al. (2023) identified communication as an important factor between empathy, team cohesion, and sports performance. This highlights the value of relational skills among athletes. Oh (2023) further showed that both communication and cohesion influenced how transformational leadership affected performance. This adds support for including communication training in sports development programs.

In women's sports, Ammara (2023) found that motivation and team cohesion greatly influenced satisfaction among women cricket players. This adds a gender perspective to the study of cohesion. Mose (2020) also stressed the role of cohesion and intra-team relationships as factors affecting performance in grassroots youth football teams. Lastly, Sabin and Alexandru (2015) concluded that team cohesion is crucial for volleyball teams, confirming that it is an important factor for improving performance across all sports and competitive levels.



Research Methodology

This study was supported with a quantitative research approach guided by a positivist philosophy, emphasizing objectivity and the analysis of numerical data to empirically examine the relationships between team cohesion, communication effectiveness, and performance satisfaction among college athletes. Data were collected at a single point in time using a cross-sectional survey design within the Bhakkar District of Punjab, Pakistan, focusing on colleges with active sports programs. The target population encompassed all college athletes enrolled in sports programs across these colleges, totaling 1,413 individuals. To ensure representative coverage of both male and female athletes across different institutions, a stratified random sampling technique was utilized, resulting in a final sample size of 283 participants selected proportionally from 18 colleges. Data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires featuring three validated instruments: the Team Cohesion Scale (Carron et al., 2002; $\alpha = 0.85$) to measure cohesion, the Communication Effectiveness Scale (Clampett et al., 1996; $\alpha = 0.78$) to assess communication, and the Performance Satisfaction Scale (Hays et al., 2009; $\alpha = 0.82$) to gauge satisfaction levels. This methodology facilitated the collection of measurable, self-reported data suitable for statistical analysis to investigate the proposed relationships and mediation effect.

Results And Discussion

Demographic Profile of College Athletes

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	202	71.3%
	Female	81	28.7%
	Total	283	100%
Formats of Sports	Individual	90	31.8%
	Dual	60	21.2%
	Team	133	47.0%
	Total	283	100%
Experience in Sports	Less than 1 year	50	17.7%
	1-2 years	80	28.3%
	3-5 years	100	35.3%
	More than 5 years	53	18.7%
	Total	283	100%
Academic Major	Science	120	42.4%
	Arts	90	31.8%
	Business	73	25.8%
	Total	283	100%
Level of Sports Participation	Local	110	38.8%
	Regional	100	35.3%
	National	73	25.8%
	Total	283	100%

The demographic profile of the 283 participants reveals that the majority were



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male (71.3%), with females comprising 28.7%. Regarding sports formats, team sports were the most common (47.0%), followed by individual (31.8%) and dual sports (21.2%). Most participants had 3–5 years of sports experience (35.3%), while 28.3% had 1–2 years, 18.7% had more than 5 years, and 17.7% had less than 1 year. In terms of academic background, 42.4% were science majors, 31.8% arts, and 25.8% business. For participation level, 38.8% competed at the local level, 35.3% at regional, and 25.8% at the national level.

Mediation Analyses Information Table

Parameter	Value
Model	4
Outcome Variable (Y)	MPSS
Predictor Variable (X)	MTCS
Mediator Variable (M)	MTCom
Sample Size	283

Table 1: Model Summary – MTCom as Outcome Variable

R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	p-value
0.8029	0.6447	0.1208	509.8972	1	281	0.0000

Table 2: Coefficients – MTCom as Outcome Variable

Variable	B	SE	T	p-value	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Constant	0.8121	0.0944	8.5993	0.0000	0.6262	0.9980
MTCS	0.4977	0.0220	22.5809	0.0000	0.4543	0.5410

Table 3: Model Summary – MPSS as Outcome Variable (with MTCS & MTCom)

R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	p-value
0.8091	0.6546	0.1455	265.3502	2	280	0.0000

Table 4: Coefficients – MPSS as Outcome Variable (with MTCS & MTCom)

Variable	B	SE	T	p-value	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Constant	0.3093	0.1165	2.6546	0.0084	0.0799	0.5386
MTCS	0.2646	0.0406	6.5206	0.0000	0.1847	0.3445
MTCom	0.5195	0.0655	7.9343	0.0000	0.3906	0.6484

Table 5: Total Effect Model Summary – MPSS as Outcome (only MTCS as predictor)

R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	p-value
0.7596	0.5770	0.1776	383.2501	1	281	0.0000



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Table 6: Coefficients – Total Effect Model (only MTCS as predictor)

Variable	B	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Constant	0.7312	0.1145	6.3849	0.0000	0.5058	0.9566
MTCS	0.5232	0.0267	19.5768	0.0000	0.4706	0.5758

Table 7: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects – MTCS → MPSS via MTCom

Effect Type	Effect	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Total Effect (c)	0.5232	0.0267	19.5768	0.0000	0.4706	0.5758
Direct Effect (c')	0.2646	0.0406	6.5206	0.0000	0.1847	0.3445
Indirect Effect (ab)	0.2585	0.0334	—	—	0.1940	0.3243

The mediation analysis revealed that MTCS (Motivational Teaching Climate Structure) significantly predicts MPSS (Motivated Physical Self-Perception), both directly and indirectly through the mediator MTCom (Motivational Teaching Communication). The total effect of MTCS on MPSS was significant ($B = 0.5232$, $p < .001$), with a notable indirect effect via MTCom ($B = 0.2585$), confirming partial mediation. MTCS significantly influenced MTCom ($B = 0.4977$, $p < .001$), and both MTCS ($B = 0.2646$) and MTCom ($B = 0.5195$) significantly predicted MPSS when included together, supporting the mediating role of MTCom in the relationship between MTCS and MPSS.

Binary Logistic Regression

Case Processing Summary

Unweighted Cases ^a		N	Percent
Selected Cases	Included in Analysis	283	100.0
	Missing Cases	0	.0
	Total	283	100.0
Unselected Cases		0	.0
Total		283	100.0

a. If weight is in effect, see classification table for the total number of cases.

Dependent Variable Encoding

Original Value	Internal Value
Low Performance Satisfaction	0
High Performance Satisfaction	1

Categorical Variables Codings

		Frequency (1)	Parameter coding
Gender of the athlete	Male	202	1.000



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(1=Male, 2=Female)	Female	81	.000
Team Cohesion Level	Low Team Cohesion	140	1.000
(0=Low, 1=High)	High Team Cohesion	143	.000

Block 0: Beginning Block Classification Table^{a,b}

Observed		Predicted Performance Satisfaction Level (0=Low, 1=High)		
		Low Performance Satisfaction	High Performance Satisfaction	Percentage Correct
Step 0	Low Performance (0=Low, 1=High)	0	124	.0
	High Performance Satisfaction	0	159	100.0
Overall Percentage				56.2

a. Constant is included in the model.

b. The cut value is .500

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant.249	.120	4.306	1	.038	1.282

Variables not in the Equation

		Score	Df	Sig.
Step 0	Variables			
	Team Cohesion Level (0=Low, 1=High)(1)	77.161	1	.000
	Gender of the athlete (1=Male, 2=Female)(1)	3.943	1	.047
	Overall Statistics	79.612	2	.000

Block 1: Method = Enter

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	84.754	2	.000
	Block	84.754	2	.000
	Model	84.754	2	.000



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Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	303.227 ^a	.259	.347

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	.143	2	.931

Contingency Table for Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

		Performance Satisfaction Level (0=Low, 1=High) = Low		Performance Satisfaction Level (0=Low, 1=High) = High		Total
		Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	
Step 1	1	75	75.576	28	27.424	103
	2	23	22.424	14	14.576	37
	3	21	20.424	78	78.576	99
	4	5	5.576	39	38.424	44

Classification Table^a

		Predicted Performance Satisfaction Level (0=Low, 1=High)		Percentage Correct
Observed		Low	High	
Step 1	Performance Low	98	26	79.0
	Satisfaction Level (0=Low, 1=High)	42	117	73.6
Overall Percentage				76.0

a. The cut value is .500

Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	Team Cohesion Level (0=Low, 1=High)(1)	-2.361	.287	67.546	1	.000	.094	.054	.166



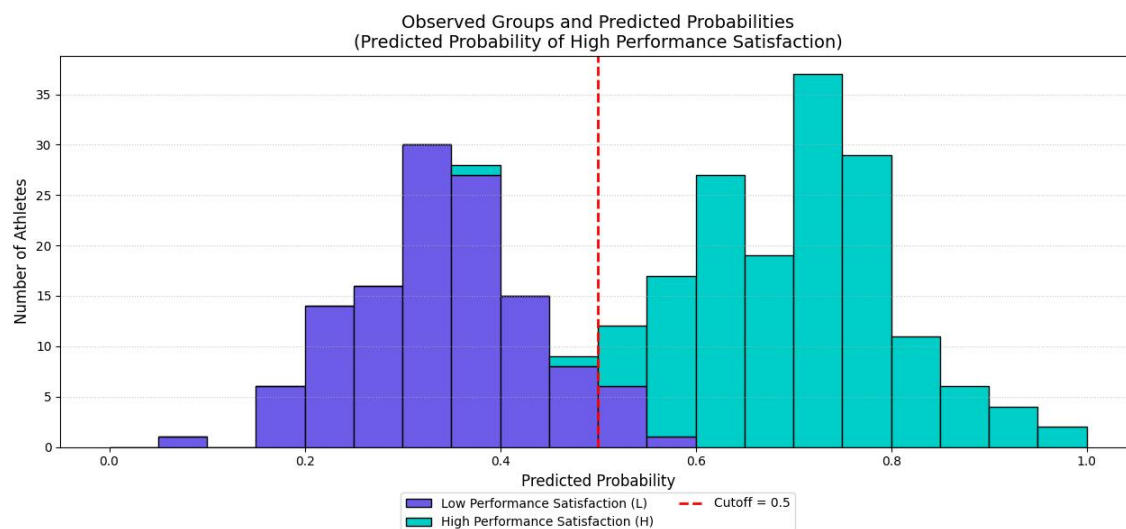
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Gender of the athlete (1=Male, 2=Female)(1)	-.583	.318	3.358	1	.067	.558	.299	1.041
Constant	1.930	.328	34.732	1	.000	6.891		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Team Cohesion Level (0=Low, 1=High), Gender of the athlete (1=Male, 2=Female).

Correlation Matrix

		Constant	Team Cohesion Level (0=Low, 1=High)(1)	Gender of the athlete (1=Male, 2=Female)(1)
Step 1	Constant	1.000	-.565	-.747
	Team Cohesion Level (0=Low, 1=High)(1)	-.565	1.000	.082
	Gender of the athlete (1=Male, 2=Female)(1)	-.747	.082	1.000



The binary logistic regression analysis examined how team cohesion level and athlete gender predict performance satisfaction. The overall model was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 84.754$, $p < .001$), explaining between 26% (Cox & Snell R^2) and 35% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance. Team cohesion was a strong and significant predictor ($B = -2.361$, $p < .001$), indicating that athletes with low team cohesion were significantly less likely to report high performance satisfaction (OR = 0.094). Gender showed a marginal effect ($B = -0.583$, $p = .067$), suggesting male athletes may have slightly lower odds of reporting high satisfaction, though this result was not statistically significant. The model's classification accuracy improved to 76%, with good fit as indicated by the Hosmer and Lemeshow test ($p = .931$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the mediating function of efficient communication in the link between team cohesion and performance satisfaction amo



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ng collegiate athletes in Pakistan's Bhakkar District. Effective communication serves as a crucial mediating mechanism through which team cohesion fosters increased performance satisfaction, according to the core findings, which strongly corroborate the hypothesised model. Although a clear correlation between cohesion and satisfaction was shown, the degree to which cohesive teams communicated in an open, transparent, and encouraging manner accounted for a significant amount of this association. This implies that while cohesiveness shapes the environment, the level of communication within that environment has a greater direct impact on athletes' satisfaction with their performance, both individually and as a team.

The results are in line with and extend Interdependence Theory (evident in DeOrtentiis et al., 2013), showing how team members' outcomes are linked; cohesion fosters interdependence, but it is communication that facilitates the coordination and mutual responsiveness necessary to achieve positive shared outcomes (satisfaction); furthermore, it supports Carron's Conceptual Model of Cohesion, emphasizing communication; and finally, the findings resonate strongly within the collectivist cultural context of Pakistan, where group harmony, interdependence, and strong social bonds are highly valued; in such settings, the emphasis on unity (cohesion) naturally aligns with cultural norms.

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There are a few limits to take into account. First, it is impossible to draw firm conclusions about causality due to the cross-sectional design. Although the mediation concept is theoretically valid, more solid establishment of temporal precedence and causality requires longitudinal or experimental designs (e.g., Erikstad et al., 2018). Second, even though validated scales are used, the use of self-reported surveys raises the possibility of social desirability and common method bias. Future findings might be strengthened by adding objective performance indicators or coach ratings. Thirdly, the research was carried out in a particular cultural and geographic setting (Pakistan's Bhakkar District). Although this broadens the cultural viewpoint, it restricts the applicability to collegiate athletes in widely disparate areas or nations. Lastly, the sample only represents one moment in the athletic season, even though it is stratified and sufficiently substantial. The effects of team dynamics and their



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impacts can fluctuate significantly. Building on this work, future investigations should use longitudinal designs to look at how cohesion, communication, and satisfaction change over the course of sports seasons. To evaluate the model's universality, studies must also examine these dynamics in a variety of cultural and athletic situations (such as various nations, individual versus team sports). By reducing self-report bias, multimethod approaches that combine surveys with observational or coach-rated data would improve validity. Key moderating factors that may affect these associations, such as gender, leadership style (Oh, 2023; Ruan & Liu, 2021), team success, or sport type, should be examined by researchers. Last but not least, building and assessing focused communication interventions within cohesive teams is essential to test their effects on performance outcomes and satisfaction experimentally, building on frameworks such as Mose's (2020) contextual analysis.

Conclusion

This study offers solid empirical proof that team cohesion improves performance satisfaction among college athletes in Pakistan's Bhakkar District through the crucial mediating role of efficient communication. Although there is a clear positive correlation between cohesion and pleasure, the team's communication quality accounts for a large amount of this association. Athletes are more likely to be content with their individual efforts and the team's overall results when cohesive teams create environments that encourage candid, transparent, and encouraging communication.

These results are especially significant given Pakistan's collectivist cultural setting, highlighting the need for togetherness (cohesion) on its own. Effective communication is crucial to converting such unity into mutual support, coordinated action, and shared understanding, all of which are important factors in interdependent group situations that influence satisfaction. The findings highlight communication as a crucial group function that connects structural cohesiveness to favorable affective outcomes, and they are in great agreement with and extend theoretical frameworks such as Carron's Model of cohesiveness and Interdependence Theory.

As a result, this study emphasizes the practical necessity for coaches and sports managers: intentional measures to improve athlete communication skills must be implemented in tandem with team building. The beneficial effects of cohesiveness on athlete satisfaction are anticipated to be greatly enhanced by interventions aimed at enhancing teams' clarity, openness, active listening, and constructive criticism, which will ultimately lead to a more satisfying and long-lasting shared athletic experience.

Research Implications

The findings of this study, which emphasize process-oriented mechanisms in team dynamics, support theoretical frameworks such as Carron's Model of cohesiveness and Interdependence Theory by confirming communication as a crucial mediator between cohesiveness and performance satisfaction. Practically speaking, it emphasizes how important it is for coaches and sports programs, especially in collectivist environments like Pakistan, to give priority to teambuilding exercises and communication skills training (such as active listening and conflict resolution) in order to increase player happiness.



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In terms of methodology, it confirms that wellknown measures (such Carron's Cohesion Scale) are applicable in nonWestern college environments, while emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive interventions that capitalize on regional norms of harmony and communication to improve team performance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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