

# **Evaluating And Managing The Factors Which Affect The Cohesiveness Of Professional Basketball Teams In Greece**

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## **Abstract**

Among the many factors, which can positively or negatively influence the final result of a basketball game and decisively contribute to the achievement of the objectives, is the cohesion between its members. Sport teams characterised by great cohesion, cooperate better, communicate positively and perform more effectively. The purpose of this research was to determine the importance of cohesion, determine the factors that influence it and recommend ways of improving it regarding the part of the coaches of basketball teams. The research was based on the review of literature and field research. The sample was consisted of 24 professional basketball coaches  $n = (24)$  from Greece who were coaching in the professional basketball league during 2013-2014 seasons. The research instrument was developed from a relevant review of literature that focused on factors that can influence team cohesiveness. This process led to seven variables that can influence basketball team cohesiveness. The basketball coaches were asked to indicate the importance of each variable on seven-point scales ranging from 1, extremely important, to 7, not important at all, by a self-completed questionnaire. The results indicated that: a) there are seven

factors which can influence the cohesion of a basketball team, b) the «homogeneity» (1.25) considered by the coaches as the most important factor that can influence team cohesiveness and c) the «financial factor» considered as the least important one. Recommendations are suggested for basketball coaches in order to keep a high level of cohesion among their players and contribute to individual and team goals.

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**Keywords:** Cohesion, basketball, coaches, management, performance

### **Introduction**

The team cohesion means the unity, the mutual approach and attraction among the members of a human team (Athos & Coffey, 1968). Carron (1982) mentions “cohesion is a dynamic process, which is characterised by the tendency of a team to remain united, aiming to the realisation of its goals/targets. Cohesion is the aggregate of the forces, which make the members of human teams, such as a professional basketball team, feel that they belong to the team and wish to remain a part of it (Daft, 2000). Teams with great cohesion communicate better than teams, which show lack of it. Also, cohesive teams exhibit greater control of the behaviour of their members (Fisher & Ellis, 1990).

Teams characterised by high rates of cohesion among their members tend to be more effective as far as their performance is concerned (Keller, 1986). Carron and Chelladurai (1981) showed that the relationship between cohesion and performance in team sports is strong. They also showed that cohesion contributes to success and success reinforces cohesion. With respect to team performance, research findings are mixed, but cohesiveness may have several effects (Erez & Somech, 1996).

The results of various surveys showed that cohesion increases performance and leads to a better communication among the members of a team. In turn, greater motivation is observed. Especially in team sports, where there is cooperation and high rate of interaction among the athletes, such as basketball, the relationship between cohesion and performance is close. Generally, it could be said that cohesion prompts the members of a team to make as many efforts as possible. According to Laios & Tzetzis (2005), cohesiveness is very crucial especially for team sports where the final score, a win or a loss, depends to a large degree on the relationship and understanding between athletes.

### **The role of the basketball coach relating to team’s cohesion**

Every team consists of a number of persons, who develop relationships between themselves and through their co-operation they pursue the realisation of the goals they have set. The coach acting as an

instructor, director and leader can greatly influence the performance of the team and substantially contribute to the team's cohesion (Hollander, 1981). He must define the rules, the ways of running the team and direct the members of the team (athletes, assistants, and personnel) as effectively as possible. He should not only know how to train and coach, but he should know how organize, manage, direct, lead and control the human power. (Laios, 1995). Successful sport teams are based on confident and capable team leaders (coaches) who use their knowledge and experience in order to positively influence individual/team performance. (Laios, Theodorakis & Gargalianos, 2003). The coaches of basketball teams must promote cohesion and keep in mind the following:

1. When a basketball team shows progress and wins, the rate of cohesion increases. When the progress is decreased and the team loses the rate of cohesion decreases as well.
2. The existence of common goals among the members of the basketball team increases cohesion, while different goals, disagreements and disputes decrease it drastically.
3. The fear that some members of the basketball team are in danger of losing certain privileges and the freedom of movement that they have in the team, decreases the rate of cohesion among the members of the team.
4. Basketball teams become better, as far as cohesion is concerned, when their needs can be satisfied with the help of their teammates. When one person can perform an activity well, then the participation of the others is decreased.
5. When there is some external danger, which threatens the basketball team's common interests, the members of the team join forces. The external threat bridges internal differences and increases the rate of cohesion.
6. The development of friendship between the members of the basketball team increases the rate of cohesion and improves chances of cooperation.
7. When the more experienced members of the group share their experiences with the new ones, the cohesion of the basketball team is more effective (Laios, 2005).

### **Factors that influence the basketball team's cohesion**

There are many factors, which can influence the cohesion of a basketball team. Daft 2000, Adler and Rodman 1994, Wehrich and Kontz 1993, Dunham and Pierce 1989, and Athos and Coffey 1968, reported many factors that can influence the cohesion of a group of people such as a basketball team.

1. The basketball team's prestige: The name, the history and the prestige of a basketball team in general influence its cohesion. In good teams, where

there is a high level of responsibility and high objectives, greater cohesion is observed.

2. Homogeneity: Homogeneity occurs when a ratter gives all employees a similar rating even if their performances are not equally good. Basketball teams the members of which are homogeneous, show higher rate of cohesion. On the contrary, basketball teams which show different interests, big financial differences as far as the athletes' payments is concerned, differences in perception and lack of homogeneity of goals and life attitude, show low rate of cohesion.

3. The personality of the coach: The name and the prestige of the coach, his knowledge and capabilities, the way he trains and guides the athletes during the game, his teaching and the definition of the motives, create harmony and cohesion in the team. On the contrary, if a coach has little prestige, his negative behaviour and the constant criticism discourage the team from having unity and cohesion.

4. The personality of the athletes: Every athlete is a separate personality, with his own characteristics, temperament and particularities. Their character and behaviour can contribute to the team's cohesion negatively or positively.

5. The amount of time the team members are together: When the athletes play together for many years, then they know each other better, they cooperate more efficiently and they cannot be easily dispersed.

6. The communication: Communication permeates every management function. Communication constitutes a very important factor for coaches and athletes in professional sports (Laios, 2005). Effective and constructive communication among the members of the basketball team helps in developing common interests, effective co-operation and lead effort to the achievement of its goals. (Laios, 2001).

7. Financial factors: Work team effectiveness is based also on personal satisfaction relating to money. The regular payments, the extra bonuses, the fines can influence the team cohesiveness.

## **Method**

The sample was consisted of 24 professional basketball coaches from Greece. All subjects were male. Coaches, who participated in the study, were coaching on the highest level of basketball in 2013-2014 seasons. (The professional basketball League includes 14 teams). The research instrument was developed from a relevant review of literature that focused on factors that can influence team cohesiveness. (Daft 2000, Adler and Rodman 1994, Wehrich and Kontz 1993, Dunham and Pierce 1989, and Athos and Coffey 1968). This process led to seven variables that can influence basketball team cohesiveness. Coaches were asked to indicate

the importance of each variable on seven-point scales ranging from 1 (extremely important) to 7 (not at all important) for both lists. The method chosen to conduct the research was that of self-completed questionnaires.

## Results

The results indicated that professional basketball coaches rated the variable of «homogeneity» (1.25) as the most important reason of influencing the team's cohesiveness. The factors «personality of the coach» (1.66) and «communication» (1.67) was followed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place respectively. In contrast, «financial factors» a variable that represented financial problems received the lowest score (3.25). Means and standard deviations for the importance of the seven variables that influence the cohesion of a professional basketball team are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations for the importance of the seven variables that can influence team cohesiveness.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Prestige of the team</i>	<i>2.91</i>	<i>1.50</i>
<i>Homogeneity</i>	<i>1.25</i>	<i>0.45</i>
<i>Personality of the coach</i>	<i>1.66</i>	<i>0.65</i>
<i>Personality of the athletes</i>	<i>2.08</i>	<i>0.90</i>
<i>Time member are together</i>	<i>2.66</i>	<i>1.06</i>
<i>Communication</i>	<i>1.67</i>	<i>0.77</i>
<i>Financial reasons</i>	<i>3.25</i>	<i>1.96</i>

## Discussion

The coaches of professional basketball teams must evaluate the importance of cohesion among the members of the team they are training. They must keep in mind that the relationship between cohesion and performance is strong. Based on review of literature it was found that there are seven factors that can influence the cohesion of a team. From these factors-variables it was found that the «homogeneity» (1.25), was considered by the basketball coaches as the most important, followed by the «personality of the coach» (1.66). «Communication» (1.67) between the coaches and great personalities as the players are in professional basketball was the next most important variable. The variables of «personalities of the athletes» (2.08), «time of incorporation» (2.66) and «prestige of the team» (2.91), were considered by the basketball coaches as less important reasons relating to the cohesiveness of their teams. Finally, the variable of the «financial reasons» (3.25) was considered by the coaches the less important reason on influencing the cohesion of the members of the team. According to coaches' opinions, money and payments in professional sports, such basketball, cannot influence the team cohesiveness in a high degree.

## **Recommendations**

The professional basketball coaches should have as an immediate objective the achievement of cohesion among the athletes as well as the promotion of co-operation. Cohesion can lead to better performance. Low rate of cohesion can cause great differentiation and diversions from the desirable performance. Therefore the basketball coaches must:

1. Help in the development of good relationships among the athletes
2. Talk with each athlete separately and solve any kind of differences that may come up
3. Reward morally and psychologically the athletes for every good effort
4. Have private meetings with the athletes and their relatives in case of need
5. Trace the cliques on time and disperse them
6. Be democratic and encourage the participation of the athletes in decision making
7. Familiarise the athletes with the responsibilities and roles their teammates have, in order to know their needs better in the field of the game
8. Help in the definition of goals
9. Help in creating effective channels of communication.

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