

Investigation into how group dynamics affect the performance of a football team

The inspiration into the interest of how group dynamics affects the positive or negative performance of a football team. Through this assignment I will be looking at team cohesion, loafing, group productivity and leadership to see how these affect a football team's performance. Team cohesion is "a common term associated with the concept of a group dynamics and is a two-way process. Individuals are attracted to a group through common motivation and value this bonds the relationship within a group" (Carron 1980). From this theory I think that if all of the performers participating in the game have a strong interest in playing the game and doing well then this will encourage the team spirit therefore influencing the teams performance. An example of this from recent is Chelsea football club. Their new owner Roman Abramovich has a lot of money and the manager Claudio Ranieri has taken the opportunity and bought a lot of expensive players from all different teams. The team has bonded very quickly and are currently 3rd in the league table.

Also from this the "social" side of the game plays a big part in the way performers perform. I think this is because if you are playing with friends in a team then you may feel that if you don't perform at your best then you are letting your friends/team friends down causing friction in the team. This will encourage the performer to play 100%. Therefore showing friends that you are committed and wanting to play.

On the negative side of this theory I think that even though the performers of the team have a good team spirit if they have little ability then this may hinder their chances of winning in competition. But their willingness will help the individuals improve therefore improving the group.

To be a good cohesive group (Carron 1980) defined that the characteristics of a cohesive group must have

- A collective identity
- A sense of shared purpose
- Structure patterns of communication

These three different points have their own key input towards stabilising the groups basis. I think all are needed as well due to the fact that if one is lost then interest and motivation may be lost and the group will not bond and perform positively.

A simple investigation into team cohesion could be if I was to pick 6 football players which were all friends and new each other. Then pick 6 football players that had never had contact before. Have them play a simple 6-a-side game for 10 minutes. Then analyse the;

End score, players reactions, how much the teams bonded, then compare the two teams.

I think from this investigation that the 6 players that were friends and new each other would have the best results due to the fact that they will find it easier to communicate and translate together. An argument against this would be the example used in earlier research about the Chelsea football club.

Future research has shown me that even at the highest level of football team cohesion is a main factor. Sven-Göran Eriksson talks a great deal about how the 'we' mentality can raise the performance of all of his players in a team and help reduce the pressure associated with big matches. He believes that a team should have a common vision

- Clear and definite goals which go hand-in-hand with this vision

- Members who share their understanding of strategy and tactics
- Great inner discipline (meaning they act professionally together)
- Players with characteristics which complement each other
- A good division of roles among the players, with all members treated equally
- Players who put the common good before their own interests
- Players who take responsibility for the whole team, with everyone accepting mistakes as long as people do their best (Sven Göran Eriksson on Football, Carlton Books, 2000)

The second theory that I am going to look into is the effects loafing have on the football team's performance.

Loafing is "when an individual is working within a group whether their performance will be consistent or will decrease". When playing in a football game there are eleven players all sharing responsibility in the teams performance. From this I think that if every performer takes care of their own areas of responsibility and does this to the best of their ability then this should be a positive influence in the teams performance. A quote for this "individual commitment to a group effort, that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilisation work (Vince Lombardi) relating to football every players effort contributes to the performance and end result. This could be investigated by watching each individual performer and analysing their consistency and if they have commitment to the group.

On the negative side I think that if there is a shared responsibility for the teams performance then individuals performance may decrease due to loss of motivation within a group also they can lessen their performance and "hide within the overall team performance" this will decrease overall team performance. A theory showing this is rowing. If there is a group of six rowers they all have to work as a team to get the best time. If one is not 'pulling their weight' their time will be slower but the performer will be able to hide within the others.

Linked to this is the next area of group productivity a simple theory is


"You cannot design an individual but you can design a team to achieve what you intend" (Peter Lawrence CEO of the Human Consulting Group)

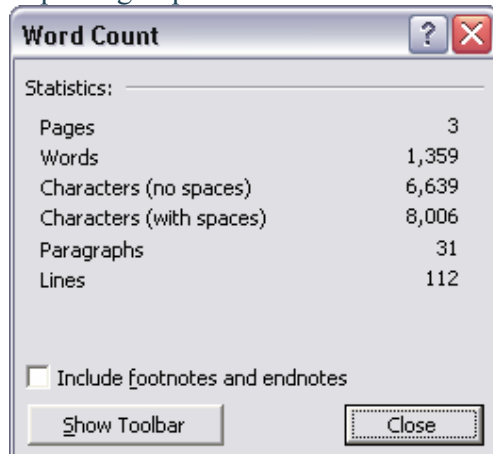
Relating this to a football team, each individual has their own skills, ability and positives they give to the group. It's a manager's job to pick up on these different areas and firstly position each performer in their best position. The next stage for the team is for the team as a group to construct methods and strategies in which they can move forward creating highest levels of group productivity and confidence within the group, this will reduce the chance of negative loafing and improve cohesion and group dynamics.

The last point which relates to group dynamics and which I think plays apart in the groups progression is leadership. There is an emergent, prescribed, autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire a good leader should have all these styles to fit into any situation. I think the leader is very important he leads by example and shows commitment. If the captain knows the best way to work with each performer and translate with them they can encourage and motivate each individual which should influence the team's performance. An example of a good leadership is Roy Keane he shows 100% commitment, shows good relationship between players and is also respected. The negative side would have to be the fact the leader (captain) is one

person and his views wont always match up with every players this may hinder the team cohesion and team spirit.

Conclusion

The aim of this assignment was to determine weather team cohesion, loafing, group productivity and leadership effects the way a football team perform. Whilst looking into team cohesion I found many things that affected what happens positively and negatively to the team. Such as motivation and common values and the way this changes the way the game is played and the bond of all players. My first theory proved to be successful while arguments could still be made about my theory. Loafing and group productivity combined together in this area. Not knowing much about each subject, while researching I found out about commitment and responsibility and the way this affects the game. The last point that I found very important to the way a group is controlled was leadership. I found the roles of the leader and how this influences the groups productivity and what good and bad points this brings to the group. Overall I think that as a group the performers must have a common motivation and the same values for the game, commitment and responsibility. Having these will improve group.



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