The Influence of Social Comparison on Team Cohesion among Team Sports Players

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of

Bachelor of Science in Psychology

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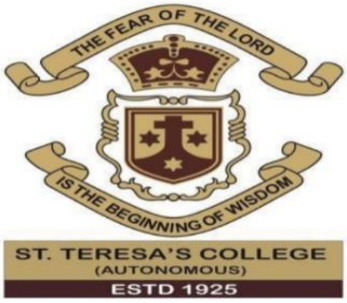

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Declaration

I, Devika Sreeni, do hereby declare that the work represented in the dissertation embodies the results of the original research work done by me in St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam under the supervision and guidance of Ms. Hajira K M, Assistant Professor of the Department of Psychology, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam,it has not been submitted by me to any other university or institution for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, title or recognition before.

Devika Sreeni

Place: Ernakulam

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Thanking you

Devika Sreeni

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

This cross-sectional study aimed to examine the relationship between social comparison and team cohesion among 220 male cricket and football players aged 16-26. Social comparison levels were assessed using the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM), while team cohesion was measured through the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ). Statistical analysis involved are Spearman's rank correlation and the Mann-Whitney U test. Results revealed a weak positive correlation between social comparison and team cohesion, indicating that higher engagement in social comparison was associated with a slight improvement in teamwork. However, the impact of social comparison on team cohesion was found to be relatively modest. Comparison between cricket and football players showed no significant differences in social comparison behaviors. Notably, football players exhibited higher levels of team cohesion compared to cricket players, despite similar social comparison levels. This suggests that football teams had a stronger sense of teamwork and cohesion compared to cricket teams. In conclusion, the study sheds light on the nuanced relationship between social comparison and team cohesion among team sport athletes. While social comparison may have some influence on team cohesion, its effect appears to be minor. Moreover, the variation in team cohesion between cricket and football players emphasizes the importance of considering sport-specific factors in understanding group dynamics and cohesion within sports teams.

Keywords – *Social Comparison, Team Cohesion, Cricket, Football*

Introduction

"Social comparison is not just about looking at others; it's about using others as a mirror to understand ourselves." - Amy Cuddy (2015)

As athletes strive for success, they navigate a landscape that requires both personal growth and teamwork. Taking part in competitive sport is typically associated with a wide range of positive social, health, and economic benefits (Wankel and Berger, 1990). However, competitive sport can also contribute to more negative consequences for both physical and mental health (Rice et al., 2016; Engebretsen et al., 2013). In their journey to become the best versions of themselves, the challenges of comparing one's progress to others become a significant factor shaping the unity of a sports team. Exploring factors that can be addressed via systematic organizational or therapeutic intervention is crucial for promoting good mental health in athletes and the general population more broadly (Walton et al., 2019). The common social comparison that athletes make during sporting competition can not only have a long-lasting effect on their self-esteem and self-perception, but also their physical health. These factors over the course of a training period culminate in eventual athlete burnout, a psychological syndrome marked by dimensions of emotional and physical exhaustion and reduced sense of accomplishment (Raedeke, 1997; Raedeke & Smith, 2001, 2009). As athletes improve and rise the ranks of competition, their desire to “be the best” intensifies, and so too does the tendency to compare.

Social comparison is notably high among team sport athletes due to the inherent nature of team dynamics and performance evaluation within these contexts. Athletes engage in continuous assessment of their own skills and contributions relative to their teammates, fostering a competitive environment that naturally gives rise to social comparison tendencies (Filho et al.,

2019). With limited playing time, a competitive environment for securing positions, and distinct roles within the team, athletes naturally engage in ongoing assessments to solidify their place in the lineup and contribute effectively. Competition in the field continue to become intense and such aggravation of environment has confronted various sport contexts with serious challenges such as assault and doping violations (Engelberg, Moston, & Skinner, 2015; Osborne, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2016). Due to pressures to perform well in sport teams, athletes are at risk for mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression) in a competitive sport setting (Rice et al., 2018).

In competitive sports “doing better” translates not only as “doing better than last time” but also as “doing better than others”. Self-reference comparisons, i.e. comparing one’s own past performance, are thus complemented by comparisons to relevant and similar others like competitors and team members. Using others as reference standards is at the core of competition in sports and physical education (Walton, Baranoff, Gilbert, & Kirby, 2020; Xiang, Liu, Li, & Guan, 2020). Here, competitive athletes pay regard to better-performing athletes to source salient information on how to improve their own performance (Gotwals & Wayment, 2002). The success of individual players is intricately linked to the team's overall performance, fostering a continuous need for athletes to assess their skills, playing time, and contributions in relation to their teammates. The global popularity and extensive media coverage of cricket and football amplify the pressure, as athletes not only compete within their respective teams but also on an international stage, intensifying comparisons with the best players worldwide. Assessing social comparison among team sport athletes aged 16-26 is crucial due to the unique developmental stage during this age range (Erikson, 1968). Additionally, understanding social comparison in this age group is essential for recognizing its implications for mental health and well-being, aligning with Festinger's theory (1954) on social comparison processes. The insights gained from

studying social comparison among these athletes contribute not only to enhancing team dynamics but also to informing coaching strategies that promote positive social comparison, motivation, and cohesion within the team (Carron et al., 1993).

Social Comparison

Social comparison refers to a behavior where we compare certain aspects of ourselves (e.g., our behavior, opinions, status, and success) to other people so that we have a better assessment of ourselves (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). This psychological phenomenon is deeply ingrained in human behavior and plays a crucial role in shaping self-perception, self-esteem, and overall well-being. Social comparisons - comparisons between the self and others - are a fundamental psychological mechanism influencing people's judgments, experiences, and behavior. Comparing to social others occurs naturally in daily life (Festinger, 1954). People tend to compare to similar others (lateral comparison) as a source of self-evaluation (Festinger, 1954; Taylor, Wayment, & Carillo, 1996), superior others (upward comparison) as a source of motivation (Taylor & Lobel, 1989), and inferior others (downward comparison) for a boost in self-worth (Morse & Gergen, 1970; Taylor & Lobel, 1989; Wills, 1981). Given that sport is inherently an arena of competition, it is likely that factors relating to social rank (how one perceives themselves compared to others) may play a key role in contributing to mental health and well-being.

Theories of Social Comparison

Social Comparison Theory- Social comparison theory was first proposed in 1954 by psychologist Leon Festinger and suggested that people have an innate drive to evaluate themselves, often in comparison to others. He believed that we engage in this comparison

process as a way of establishing a benchmark by which we can make accurate evaluations of ourselves. We all compare ourselves to others in our social worlds, whether by comparing our looks to those of celebrities we see in the media or our talents to those of our coworkers. In psychology, social comparison theory is one explanation for this tendency. Psychologist Leon Festinger believed that we engage in this comparison process as a way of establishing a benchmark by which we can make accurate evaluations of ourselves. In essence, social comparison theory states that people compare themselves to one another because of an innate human desire to improve. Self-evaluation is key to improving, as this process reveals their strengths and weaknesses. Other people provide a framework for this evaluation. Otherwise, the individual would have to come up with their own definitions of what constitutes a strength and a weakness. Instead, they let society do the work, and compare themselves to others in society to get an idea of where they stand. The theory has broad applications in understanding social dynamics, motivation, and self-perception across various domains, making it a foundational concept in social psychology (Festinger, 1954).

Social Identity Theory- Developed by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s, this theory posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, leading to in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. Social comparison plays a role in defining one's own identity in relation to these groups.

Temporal Comparison Theory- Temporal comparison theory, also known as temporal comparison process, was proposed by Gerard E. Zuriff in 1988 (Zuriff, 1988). This theory suggests that individuals often compare their current selves with their past selves or with their anticipated future selves. Temporal comparisons influence individuals' self-evaluations, goals,

and emotions, playing a significant role in shaping their perceptions of personal progress and development over time.

Self- Evaluation Maintenance Theory- Self-Evaluation Maintenance Theory (SEM), proposed by Steven Tesser in 1988, suggests that individuals compare themselves to others to maintain or enhance their self-esteem (Tesser, 1988). This can lead to complex processes of social comparison depending on the closeness of the relationship and the relevance of the comparison domain.

Types of Social Comparison

Upward Comparison - Upward comparison or a detected negative discrepancy to a comparison standard evokes negative emotions, such as guilt, shame and a drop in self-esteem (Carver, 2004; Carver & Scheier, 1981, 1990). Upward comparisons on relevant dimensions can threaten our self-evaluation and jeopardize self-esteem (Tesser, 1988). On the other hand, they can also lead to joy and admiration for others' accomplishments on dimensions that are not relevant to the self, where one's self-evaluation is not under threat. This type of comparison involves looking up to individuals who are better in some way, whether it's in terms of skills, accomplishments, appearance, intelligence, or any other relevant attribute. The impact of upward social comparison depends on factors such as the individual's mindset, the context of the comparison, and their ability to use it constructively for personal growth. Upward comparison or a detected negative discrepancy to a comparison standard evokes negative emotions, such as guilt, shame and a drop in self-esteem (Carver, 2004; Carver & Scheier, 1981, 1990) For example, in the context of sports, an athlete engaging in upward social comparison might compare their performance to that of a teammate who consistently performs at a higher level. This can serve as motivation for the athlete to improve their own skills and strive for excellence.

Similarly, in the workplace, an employee might engage in upward social comparison by looking at a colleague who has achieved significant success or recognition, using that comparison as inspiration for professional development.

Downward Comparison - Downward comparison or a positive discrepancy between self and comparison standard is related to positive emotion, such as pride, happiness and a boost in self-esteem (i.e. self-enhancement, Morse & Gergen, 1970; Wills, 1981). Downward comparisons may boost our self-evaluation on relevant dimensions, leading to a self-enhancement effect (Wills, 1981), such as when an individual suffering from an illness makes downward comparisons with those suffering even more. Downward social comparison serves as a coping mechanism, helping individuals to feel better about themselves by emphasizing their relative advantages. In sports, a downward social comparison could occur when an athlete, facing challenges or setbacks, compares themselves to another athlete who is perceived as less skilled or is encountering greater obstacles. Downward comparison or a positive discrepancy between self and comparison standard is related to positive emotion, such as pride, happiness and a boost in self-esteem (i.e. self-enhancement, Morse & Gergen, 1970; Wills, 1981). For instance, a recovering football player might look at a teammate with a more challenging rehabilitation process and derive a sense of relative advantage, boosting their self-esteem and motivation during the recovery. This comparison helps athletes gain perspective and resilience, but it's essential to strike a balance and not diminish the validity of their own struggles.

Factors Affecting Social Comparison

Social comparison, as delineated by Festinger in his classic work "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes" (1954), is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors that intricately shape how individuals assess themselves in comparison to others. As D. T. Gilbert,

Giesler, and Morris (1995) suggested recently, the process of social comparison is "spontaneous, effortless, and unintentional" and "relatively automatic" (p. 227; cf. Bandura & Jourdan, 1991; Wood, 1989). The relevance of a comparison to personal goals and values is pivotal (Festinger, 1954), as highlighted by the concept of similarity and identifiability, where individuals are more prone to engage in social comparison with those they perceive as similar or identifiable (Goethals & Darley, 1977). Cultural and social norms define the criteria for comparison, influencing inclinations toward upward or downward social comparison (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). Personal values and goals further contribute to the nuanced nature of social comparisons (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). The emotional state becomes a key factor, with mood influencing the direction and impact of social comparisons (Wills, 1981). Varying levels of self-esteem lead individuals to approach social comparison differently, with higher self-esteem individuals utilizing upward comparisons for motivation (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). individuals with low self-esteem, whose self-concepts are particularly unstable or uncertain (Campbell, 1990; Swallow & Kuiper, 1988), are thought to be especially interested in social comparison (Wayment & Taylor, 1995; Wood & Lockwood, in press). Similarly, depressed people have been shown to be more sensitive to and more interested in comparison with others (Ahrens & Alloy, 1997; Swallow & Kuiper, 1990), again, apparently because of uncertainty about themselves (Weary, Marsh, & McCormick, 1994). The same is true for people who are high in uncertainty about their own mood states (Marsh & Webb, 1996) and, more generally, for those who are high in neuroticism (Fujita, 1995; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; Van der Zee, Buunk, & Sanderman, 1998), a trait that also has a significant uncertainty component (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In addition to low self-esteem, depression, and neuroticism, other studies have linked personality styles, such as stress reactions (Hemphill & Lehman, 1991) and coping strategy (Affleck & Tennen, 1991),

with increased interest in comparison. The perceived control an individual has over a specific attribute or outcome plays a role in determining the likelihood and direction of social comparison (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). These factors collectively highlight the intricate and dynamic nature of social comparison processes, shaping individuals' self-perceptions and behaviors across diverse contexts.

Team Cohesion

Team cohesion is the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group. (Festinger, Schacter & Back, 1950, p164).

A team is a group of people who work together to achieve a common goal. Team members depend on each other to complete tasks and share common goals and objectives. Sports teams have their own internal dynamics, structure, and organizational hierarchy. Group Cohesion is a dynamic process which is reflected in the tendency for 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). Additionally, research by Daniel C. Funk and Albert V. Carron in "Group cohesion in sport and exercise: Past, present, and future directions" (Funk & Carron, 2014) provides insights into the historical evolution and future trajectories of group cohesion research in sports psychology, reinforcing its significance in team dynamics across various contexts.

Theories of Team Cohesion

Carron’s Model of Team Cohesion - Carron's Model of Team Cohesion, developed by Albert V. Carron, William N. Widmeyer, and Lawrence R. Brawley, is a seminal framework in sports psychology that comprehensively explores the multifaceted nature of team cohesion. The

model posits that team cohesion consists of two primary components: social cohesion and task cohesion (Carron et al., 1993). Social cohesion refers to the emotional bonds and interpersonal relationships among team members, reflecting the degree of personal attraction and liking within the team. In contrast, task cohesion relates to the team's commitment toward achieving its objectives and goals, signifying the collective focus on success and excellence in performance. These dimensions work in tandem, shaping the overall cohesion experienced by a team.

Social Exchange Theory -Social Exchange Theory, rooted in social psychology, suggests that team cohesion arises from the reciprocal exchanges of resources, support, and rewards among team members (Blau, 1964). Positive interactions and mutual assistance strengthen bonds within the team, leading to greater cohesion (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

Structural Determinants Theory- Structural Determinants Theory, proposed by Beal et al. in 2003, suggests that team cohesion is influenced by structural factors such as team size, composition, and stability (Beal, Cohen, Burke, & McLendon, 2003). Teams with smaller sizes, diverse compositions, and longer durations tend to exhibit higher levels of cohesion (Beal et al., 2003).

Group Integration Theory- Group Integration Theory, proposed by Carron in 1982, suggests that team cohesion is influenced by two components: task cohesion (shared commitment to achieving team goals) and social cohesion (positive relationships among team members) (Carron, 1982). Both components contribute to overall team cohesion (Carron, 1982).

Types of Team Cohesion

Social Cohesion- Social cohesion within a team refers to the interpersonal relationships, emotional bonds, and overall camaraderie among its members. This type of cohesion is essential

for fostering a positive and supportive team environment. In sports psychology, social cohesion has been recognized as a key factor influencing team dynamics and performance.

Task Cohesion - Task cohesion refers to an individual's attraction to the group because of shared commitment to the group task (Brawley, Carron, & Widmeyer, 1987; Zaccaro, 1991). It reflects the team's collective focus on achieving success and excellence in its performance. Task cohesion is crucial for ensuring that team members work together cohesively towards common objectives, enhancing overall team effectiveness.

Factors Affecting Team Cohesion

Team cohesion, the extent to which members of a team work together cohesively, is influenced by a multitude of factors that can be categorized into social, environmental, leadership, and task-related dimensions. Social factors include team size, stability, and member similarity, with larger and more stable teams, as well as greater member similarity, often fostering higher levels of cohesion (Carron et al., 1998). Environmental factors encompass the context in which the team operates, and the success or failure of the team, as well as shared positive or challenging experiences, can significantly impact cohesion (Filho et al., 2019; Carron et al., 1998). Leadership style is a critical element, with supportive and transformational leadership positively influencing team cohesion (Filho et al., 2019; Carron et al., 1998). Task interdependence, reflecting the degree to which team members depend on each other to accomplish tasks, is another influential factor, with higher levels of task interdependence fostering greater cohesion (Carron et al., 1998). These factors collectively contribute to the development and maintenance of both social and task cohesion within a team, shaping the overall dynamics and effectiveness of the team.

Statement of the Problem

Is the level of perception of team cohesion affected by social comparison in cricket and football players and how that level of social comparison and team cohesion is different in the two sports (cricket and football).

Rationale of the Study

The rationale behind studying the practical insights into managing social comparison tendencies in the context of team cohesion lies in the potential benefits for the development of training programs, interventions, and strategies to enhance overall team performance. Social comparison is a natural human tendency, and in team settings, it can significantly impact relationships, motivation, and cooperation among team members. Understanding the dynamics of social comparison provides a foundation for creating targeted interventions that address potential challenges and leverage the positive aspects of this phenomenon. By investigating this relationship, researchers aim to uncover insights into how athletes perceive themselves relative to their teammates, how these perceptions affect team dynamics such as communication, trust, and cooperation, and ultimately, how they influence team success.

Coaches are instrumental in shaping team culture and influencing the psychological climate within a team. Recognizing the impact of social comparison on team dynamics allows coaches to implement strategies that foster a positive team environment. For instance, coaches can design training programs that emphasize collaboration over competition, promote a culture of support and encouragement, and facilitate communication to address individual concerns related to social comparison.

The literature review is a written overview of major writings and other sources on a selected topic. Sources covered in the review may include scholarly journal articles, books, government reports, Web sites, etc. The literature review provides a description, summary and evaluation of each source.

Oh & Yoo (2023) investigated the relationship between transformational leadership, social norms, and team cohesion, with a focus on individual and team sports athletes. Their findings revealed that transformational leadership positively influenced social norms and team cohesion, with social norms also positively affecting team cohesion. Moreover, the interaction of transformational leadership and individual/team sports athletes significantly impacted team cohesion, with individual sports athletes showing slightly higher cohesion levels.

The study "Relationships among Sports Group Cohesion, Passion, and Mental Toughness in Chinese Team Sports Athletes" by Song Gu et al. (2022) investigated the interplay between cohesion using the GEQ, passion, and mental toughness. The findings suggest that fostering a team culture emphasizing goal setting, inclusivity, and passion is crucial for enhancing athletes' mental toughness and long-term development in team sports.

The study conducted by Ramkumar, N, & Suresh, R. (2022) aimed to investigate the relative study on team cohesion among cricket players at YMCA College of Physical Education, Chennai. Participants completed the Group Environment Questionnaire (Carron et al., 1985). The results showed that there was no significant difference in ATGS and ATGT scores among cricket players. However, there was a significant difference in GIS scores among cricket players.

A study by Diel K. et al. (2021) investigated the motivational and emotional effects of social comparison. Contrary to expectations, athletes didn't consistently engage in more upward

comparisons, and only specific aspects of sport-specific disposition predicted such comparisons. Moderate upward comparisons correlated with increased motivation, while extreme ones led to decreased motivation and disengagement. Happiness decreased with an upward comparison but increased with a downward comparison.

Kang et al. (2020) conducted a study comparing psychological and cognitive characteristics between professional internet game players and professional baseball players. The findings revealed that esports players exhibited similar psychological characteristics to pro-baseball players, including higher scores in novelty seeking, self-directedness, and self-transcendence, as well as decreased state anxiety scores, compared to the general population.

Ozturk, E., Karyagdi, S., & Ustundag, M (2017) conducted a study comparing the social identity perception of students at the School of Physical Education and Sports and students in different majors and results showed statistically significant differences in mean scores based on certain variables. Specifically, students with well-balanced and satisfying friendships scored higher on social identity perception compared to those who did not have such friendships. Similarly, participants who followed a regular exercise and sports program exhibited higher social identity perception scores compared to those who did not have a regular sports program.

Asamoah B., & Grobbelaar H. W. (2017) examined the relationship between team cohesion and performance in African soccer. Results revealed that top-performing teams had greater previous championship experience and that individual attraction to the group positively influenced performance, while higher levels of group integration were associated with lower performance. The study highlights the importance of considering both task and social dimensions in fostering team cohesion and performance.

The study "Team Member Communication and Perceived Cohesion in Youth Soccer" by McLaren, C. D., & Spink, K. S., (2016) investigated the relationship between intrateam communication and cohesion in youth soccer. Results from multilevel analyses indicated that task cohesion was significantly influenced by acceptance, positive conflict, and negative conflict communication. Similarly, social cohesion was predicted by distinctiveness, positive conflict, and negative conflict communication. These findings suggest a connection between intrateam communication and cohesion in youth sports, highlighting both similarities and differences in the types of communication associated with task and social cohesion.

Boyd, M., Kim, M. S., Ensari, N., & Yin, Z. (2014) investigated the relationship between perceptions of the motivational team climate and task and social cohesion among male college athletes. Results revealed that individual perceptions of a task-involving climate positively predicted individual-attraction-to-group task cohesion, while perceptions of an ego-involving climate negatively predicted it. Moreover, perceptions of a task-involving climate significantly predicted individual-attraction-to-group social cohesion and group-integration task cohesion. However, perceptions of an ego-involving climate failed to demonstrate any predictive value in relation to team cohesion.

The study Interdependence and interpersonal influence among individual sport teammates by M. Blair Evans (2014) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the dynamics of groups and interpersonal influence within individual sport teams. The findings illustrate how interdependence structures shape the group environment and underscore the importance of considering ways to optimize group functioning, even among individual sport athletes who may not typically exhibit high levels of task interdependence.

The study by Ulrich Schäfer (2012) investigated the influence of different dimensions of social comparison on performance measure choice and team composition. It found that individuals in status-seeking roles engaged in social comparison not only based on monetary income but also on effort. The findings indicated that contracts should consider both monetary income and effort to address different dimensions of social comparison effectively. Additionally, team composition played a crucial role in contract drafting.

In the study, Esfahani, N., Soflu, H. G., & Ahmadian, H (2011) investigated the mood differences among basketball players in Iran League 2 and its relationship with team cohesion and performance. The findings revealed significant differences in all mood sub-scales between the winner and loser groups. Additionally, a direct relationship was observed between mood, team cohesion, and performance in basketball players. Statistical analysis indicated a meaningful relationship between behavioral traits and basketball players' performance (win or lose), with the winning group exhibiting better scores across all behavior trait sub-scales.

The study conducted by Muthiaine M.C. (2010) aimed to explore the relationship between team cohesion and sports performance among basketball teams in the 2010 National League in Kenya. Specifically, the researchers investigated differences in social and task cohesion among teams, as well as the relationship between cohesion and win-loss records. They also examined gender differences in cohesion and team size, and how these factors related to cohesion. The results of the analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in cohesion between male and female basketball team players in the National Classic League during the 2010 season.

The study "Effects of Match Result and Social Comparison on Sport State Self-Esteem Fluctuations" by Bardel M.H et al. (2010) aimed to investigate fluctuations in sport state self-

esteem components (Perceived Athletic Competence and Satisfaction with Current Sport Performance) based on match results (win or loss) and social comparison (downward, lateral, or upward). Results revealed a main effect of match result on both components of sport state self-esteem (win > loss), as well as an interaction effect between match result and social comparison on Perceived Athletic Competence. Specifically, Perceived Athletic Competence significantly decreased after a loss against an inferior-ranked opponent (downward comparison).

The study "The Relationship Among Athlete Leadership Behaviors and Cohesion in Team Sports" by Vincer D.J & Loughead T.M (2010) investigated how athlete leadership behaviors influence perceptions of team cohesion. Results indicated that Training and Instruction and Social Support positively influenced all dimensions of cohesion, while Autocratic Behavior had a negative association with cohesion dimensions. Additionally, Democratic Behavior was positively related to one dimension of cohesion.

This chapter describes the aim, objectives, hypothesis, study design, sample and sampling design, tools and statistical analysis of the study.

Aim:

To investigate the influence of social comparison on team cohesion among team sport athletes.

Objective:

- To study the relationship between social comparison levels (comparing oneself to others) and the overall cohesion between a sports team.
- To assess how social comparison and team cohesion levels vary across different sports (Cricket and football).

Hypothesis:

H1 - There is a significant relationship between the level of social comparison and team cohesion among team sport players.

H2 – The influence of social comparison is different across cricket and football.

H3- The amount of team cohesion is different in cricket and football.

Operational Definition:

Social Comparison - Social comparison is operationally defined as the sum of the scores obtained on a 11-item comparison orientation measure (Iowa- Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure) developed by Gibbons and Buunk in 1999.

Team Cohesion – Team cohesion is operationally defined as the sum of scores obtained on the 18-item Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by A. V. Carron, W. N.

Widmeyer, and L. R. Brawley in 1985. It measures two major dimensions of cohesion: social and task.

Research Design:

Correlational Research Design and Mann-Whitney U test was opted for the study.

Correlational research design was opted for the study. A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative.

The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric test used to compare two independent groups that might not be normally distributed. It analyses the ranks of the data, not the raw numbers, making it good for uneven data. It's useful to see if the medians (centre points) of two groups are statistically different.

Sample:

220 Male cricket and football players (110 cricketers and 110 football players) from various coaching centers and colleges in Ernakulam within the age group 16-26.

Population:

Cricket and football players.

Sampling Design:

The sample design opted for this study was purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The study utilized purposive sampling method to recruit participants. In purposive sampling, researchers aim to identify members of the population who are anticipated to possess specific

characteristics or experiences. This enables them to selectively choose individuals or cases that align with their study. Snowball sampling, on the other hand, is a non-probability sampling technique used in research to recruit participants through referrals from existing participants.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Male cricket and football players from various coaching centers and colleges in Ernakulam
- Age group 16-26
- Participants who are willing to participate

Exclusion Criteria:

- Athletes who are not actively participating in the sport
- Female athletes

Tools used:

Informed Consent and Socio-demographic data sheet-

The socio demographic sheet was provided to gather the details of the participants with respect to their age and the sport they play along with the informed consent.

Group Environment Questionnaire-

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ 1985) is a four-scale instrument with 18 items that measure the perceived cohesion of sport teams. More specifically, the GEQ comprises subscales that assess the following constructs: (a) Individual Attractions to the Group–Task (ATG-T, the individual's perceptions of his/her personal involvement in task aspects of the group), (b) Individual Attractions to the Group–Social (ATG-S, the individual's perceptions of

his/her involvement in social aspects of the group), (c) Group Integration–Task (GI-T, the individual's perceptions of the degree of unity the group possesses surrounding task aspects), and (d) Group Integration–Social (GI-S, the individual's perceptions of the degree of unity the group possesses regarding social aspects). From the perspective of the GEQ, Carron and colleagues (1998) reported that the original Cronbach alpha values of the four scales were 0.75 (ATG-T), 0.64 (ATG-S), 0.70 (GI-T), and 0.76 (GI-S).

Comparison Orientation Scale-

Iowa- Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) was developed by Gibbons and Buunk in 1999 and comprises of 11 items and is a 9-point likert scale. The cronbach's alpha of the original sample was 0.83 and exhibited high construct validity.

Procedure:

The data in the present study has been collected from the population by giving out questionnaires. An informed consent form was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire to make sure that the confidentiality of the participants' data would be maintained. This was followed by a few questions that collected the demographic details of the participant. The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) was followed by the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM). The questionnaires were administered during a regular practice session, neither immediately before nor after a game, to minimize competition specific responses. All players in attendance at the practices volunteered to participate. After providing consent, players completed the questionnaires independently in the dressing room prior to practice. The questionnaire took approximately 10 min to complete. The questionnaires were scored according to the scoring guidelines given in them and the results were obtained using SPSS software version 29.0.2.0.

Ethical considerations:

- Research participants were not subjected to harm in any way whatsoever.
- Respect for the dignity of research participants was prioritized.
- Full consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study.
- Confidentiality of research participants was ensured.
- The anonymity of individuals and organizations participating in the research was ensured.
- Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research was avoided.
- Any type of communication in relation to the research was done with honesty and transparency.

Statistical Analysis:

The data collected from the participants was analyzed using SPSS Software version 29.0.2.0 As the population is non-parametric the correlation of the data was measured using Spearman Correlation Coefficient and because significant correlation was present, regression was also done. The Mann-Whitney U test was also done to compare between the 2 sports- cricket and football.

Normality Testing

Summary of Kolmogrov-Smirnov Test of Normality of Social Comparison and Team Cohesion-

Table 1

Variable	Significance
Social Comparison	0.078
Team Cohesion	0.002

The Kolmogrov-Smirnov Test of Normality of Social Comparison and Team Cohesion shows that variables are non-normal as one of the values is greater than 0.05 and the other is less than 0.05.

The study was conducted to investigate the relationship between social comparison and team cohesion among cricket and football players. The research comprised of 220 participants, 110 cricket players and 110 football players. Data was collected through purposive and snowball sampling methods.

Table 2

Mean and standard deviation of social comparison and team cohesion.

	Mean	Std.Deviation	N
Sense of Belonging	3.1223	0.60788	220
Resilience	5.0457	0.98701	220

From the given table; the mean and standard deviation of social comparison is found to be 3.1223 and 0.60788 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of team cohesion is found to be 5.0457 and 0.98701 respectively.

H1- There is a significant relationship between the level of social comparison and team cohesion among team sport players.

Table 3

Indicates the correlation between Social Comparison and Team Cohesion among 220 individuals.

	Team Cohesion
Social Comparison	0.187

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01level (2 tailed).

The value of 0.187 indicates a weak positive relationship between social comparison (SC) and team cohesion (GEIS), indicating that we fail to reject H1. A positive correlation suggests that as social comparison increases, team cohesion tends to increase slightly. It can be concluded that although the relationship between social comparison and team cohesion is weak, there is still a meaningful association between the variables among the sample. Høigaard, Tofteland, and Ommundsen (2006) investigated the extent to which team cohesion influences social loafing in a 30-meter sprint relay. The results showed that participants in cohesive groups tended to perform equally well under identified and non-identified conditions. In contrast, those in non-cohesive teams ran more slowly under the non-identified condition. This indicates that the scope for social comparison will be less as everyone within the team tends to perform equally well in a cohesive team.

Social comparisons among cricket and football players can be influenced by various factors beyond cohesion. Self-esteem and competitiveness significantly shape how athletes compare themselves to others. Higher self-esteem may lead to more positive comparisons, while lower self-esteem might result in negative comparisons (Diel, K., Bröker, L., Raab, M., & Hofmann, W., 2021). Team culture influences norms and impacts how players perceive themselves relative to teammates. Leadership styles within the team also play a role in social comparison dynamics. Personal goals and motivations of individual players also play a significant role, as players may compare themselves to others to achieve excellence or avoid feelings of inadequacy.

Mann Whitney U Test

H2 – The influence of social comparison may vary across different cricket and football.

Table 4

Indicates the result of Mann-Whitney U Test comparing difference in social comparison between cricket and football players.

Variable	Mean Rank		*U*	*z*	*P*
	Cricket	Football			
Social Comparison	116.31	104.69	6689.000	1.355	0.175

Since the p-value (0.175) is greater than the common significance level (such as 0.05), therefore rejecting H2. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in social comparison between cricket and football players. In practical terms, this means that both cricket and football players exhibit similar levels of social comparison behavior.

Sarkar and Kandar (2022) conducted a comparative study to examine selected physical fitness variables among university-level cricket and football players. The study aimed to determine if significant differences existed between the two groups in terms of physical fitness variables. Contrary to the hypothesis, the results revealed no significant differences between cricket players and football players in the 50 yards dash, standing broad jump, and shuttle run. This indicates that there is not a lot of difference in terms of physical fitness, showing that their level of comparison is also not very different.

H3- The amount of team cohesion is different in cricket and football.

Table 5

Indicates the result of the Mann-Whitney U Test comparing difference in team cohesion between cricket and football players.

Variable	Mean Rank		*U*	*z*	*p*
	Cricket	Football			
Social Comparison	101.41	119.59	5050.500	-2.118	0.034

Since the p-value (0.034) is less than the common significance level (such as 0.05), we reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is a statistically significant difference in team cohesion between cricket and football players. Specifically, football players (mean rank 119.59) exhibit higher team cohesion compared to cricket players (mean rank 101.41). This indicates that H3 is not rejected.

Sport type also plays a role in cohesion dynamics. For example, in coactive sports (e.g., bowling, archery), team members perform separately, and the team outcome is a product of combined individual performances. In interactive sports (e.g., volleyball, soccer), goal accomplishment requires the establishment of complex patterns of interaction and coordination among team members. Indeed, previous research has shown that cohesion dynamics is related to sport type (Carron AV, Colman MM, Wheeler J, Stevens D).

Westre and Weiss (1991) explored the relationship between perceived coaching behaviors and group cohesion in high school football teams and assessed the cohesion of their team using the Group Environment Questionnaire (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). The study indicated that perceptions of team and individual success, as well as player playing status, were

related to perceptions of coaching behaviors and team cohesion, whereas offensive and defensive positions did not exhibit such associations.

Conclusion

The study offers insights into the relationship between social comparison and team cohesion among cricket and football players, revealing nuanced dynamics within team sports. Despite finding a weak positive link between social comparison and team cohesion, the study suggests that its impact is relatively limited. Notably, both cricket and football athletes showed similar levels of involvement in social comparison behaviors, indicating shared pressures across different team sports. However, a significant contrast emerged in team cohesion levels, with football players demonstrating higher cohesion than their cricket counterparts. This suggests that while social comparison may influence cohesion, other sport-specific factors like teamwork dynamics or coaching strategies play a more significant role. These findings underscore the intricacies of team dynamics and highlight the need for tailored interventions to foster cohesion, considering the unique aspects of each sport.

Findings

- A key finding was a weak positive relationship between social comparison and team cohesion. This suggests that as athletes engage in more social comparison, their sense of teamwork tends to experience a slight improvement.
- No significant differences were found between the two groups in terms of social comparison behaviors. Both cricket and football players engaged in similar levels of comparing themselves with their teammates or peers.
- Despite similar levels of social comparison, a notable distinction emerged regarding team cohesion between cricket and football players. Football players exhibited higher levels of team cohesion compared to cricket players. This indicates that the sense of teamwork and

cohesion within football teams was stronger than that observed in cricket teams, despite both groups engaging in similar levels of social comparison.

Limitations

- Data collected from cricket and football coaching centers and college teams may not be representative of all athletes within the specified age range. Athletes who participate in coaching centers or college teams may differ in various aspects, such as skill level, commitment, or motivation, from those who do not.
- Since data collection was limited to specific locations and age groups, the findings may not generalize to athletes outside of these contexts or to different age groups.
- The reliance on self-report measures for assessing social comparison and team cohesion introduces the possibility of response bias. Participants may provide socially desirable responses or may not accurately recall or report their experiences, leading to potential inaccuracies in the data.
- A cross-sectional design may limit the ability to establish causality between social comparison and team cohesion.
- The study may not have accounted for potential confounding variables that could influence the relationship between social comparison and team cohesion, such as individual differences in personality, leadership styles, or team culture.
- The tools used to assess social comparison and team cohesion may have limitations in terms of validity and reliability. It's essential to ensure that the measures used accurately capture the constructs of interest and demonstrate consistent results over time.

- Focusing solely on cricket and football may overlook potential differences in social comparison and team cohesion across other team sports. Including a broader range of sports could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics.
- Athletes within the specified age range may vary widely in their experiences, skills, and motivations. Failure to account for this heterogeneity may obscure important nuances in the relationship between social comparison and team cohesion

Implications

- Coaches and team leaders must recognize the paramount importance of fostering team cohesion in competitive sports settings. Strategies such as team-building exercises, effective communication channels, and promoting unity among athletes are crucial for enhancing overall team cohesion.
- Understanding the differences in team cohesion between sports like cricket and football provides valuable insights for targeted interventions. Coaches and team leaders can tailor their approaches to address specific challenges and opportunities within each sport.
- The study highlights the interplay between team cohesion and social comparison behaviors among athletes. Strengthening team cohesion becomes foundational for organizations or teams aiming to enhance social comparison behaviors. By fostering a cohesive team environment, organizations can create a context conducive to positive social comparisons and mutual encouragement among teammates.
- Comprehensive approaches that address multiple facets of team dynamics, including leadership, communication, and individual well-being, are essential for promoting a positive team culture and maximizing performance potential.

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Appendix – A

Informed Consent

Title of Study: Influence of Social Comparison on Team Cohesion Among Team Sport Athletes

I hereby consent to participate in the research study titled "Influence of Social Comparison on Team Cohesion Among Team Sport Athletes." I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I acknowledge that all information collected will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. I have read and understood the information provided in this form, and I agree to participate in the study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix – B

Socio- Demographic Details

Name-

Age-

Sport played -

Appendix – C

Iowa- Netherlands Comparison Orientation Scale

"Most people compare themselves from time to time with others. For example, they may compare the way they feel, their opinions, their abilities, and/or their situation with those of other people. There is nothing particularly "good" or "bad" about this type of comparison, and some people do it more than others. We would like to find out how often you compare yourself with other people. To do that we would like you to indicate how much you agree with each statement below by using the following scale."

A **B** **C** **D** **E**

I strongly disagree I strongly agree

1. I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing.
2. I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things.
3. If I want to find out how well I have done something. I compare what I have done with how others have done it.
4. I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g. social skills, popularity) with other people.
5. I am not the type of person who compares often with others. (reversed)
6. I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life.
7. I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences.
8. I often try to find out what others think about who face similar problems I face.
9. I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do.
10. If I want to learn more about something I try to find out what others think about it.
11. I never consider my situation in like relative to that of other people. (reversed)

Appendix– D

Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ)

Name: _____ Team: _____ Date: _____

This questionnaire is designed to assess your perceptions of your team. There are no wrong or right answers, so please give your immediate reaction. Some of the questions may seem repetitive, but please answer ALL questions. Your personal responses will be kept in strictest confidence.

The following statements are designed to assess your feelings about YOUR PERSONALINVOLVEMENT with this team. Please CIRCLE a number from 1 to 9 to indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1.I do not enjoy being a part of the social activities of this team.

2. I'm not happy with the amount of playing time I get.

3.I am not going to miss the members of this team when the season ends.

4.I'm unhappy with my team's level of desire to win.

5.Some of my best friends are on this team.

6.This team does not give me enough opportunities to improve my personal performance.

7.I enjoy other parties rather than team parties.

8.I do not like the style of play on this team.

9.For me, this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong.

The following statements are designed to assess your perceptions of YOUR TEAM AS AWHOLE. Please CIRCLE a number from 1 to 9 to indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements.10.

10.Our team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance.

11.Members of our team would rather go out on their own than get together as a team.

12.We all take responsibility for any loss or poor performance by our team.

13.Our team members rarely party together.

14.Our team members have conflicting aspirations for the team's performance.

15.Our team would like to spend time together in the off season.

16.If members of our team have problems in practice, everyone wants to help them so we can get back together again.

17.Members of our team do not stick together outside of practice and games.

18.Our team members do not communicate freely about each athlete's responsibilities during competition or practice.