



Satisfaction and Cohesion Within Youth Girls Soccer Teams in the Bay Area

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INTRODUCTION

There are thousands of girls' youth soccer teams in the United States, offering young girls the chance not only to improve their soccer skills, but also to develop important leadership and social skills. Many teams, however, struggle with bonding and creating an environment in which everyone feels truly satisfied with their experience.

The goal of this project is to conduct a survey of soccer players, discover variables that contribute to satisfaction, and use the findings to create a curriculum that will help teams enhance their overall team environment.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Very few studies have examined how the team environment affects the satisfaction of players. One study found that the leadership styles of coaches can affect the health and happiness of soccer players (Turman 2008). Positive and engaged coaching leads to happier players who put more effort into the sport and bond better with their teammates (Smith 1977). Furthermore, the more a team focuses on a common goal and works efficiently toward that goal, the more unified the teammates feel (Ronayne 2004). A significant relationship was found between intrateam communication and athletic satisfaction (Sullivan and Gee 2007).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Answers from the 252 completed surveys were adapted into a 100-point scale to make the values easier to understand and show the effects of coach and team behaviors on player satisfaction. Least squares regression was used to estimate how each type of behavior affected satisfaction, holding other behaviors constant. Two regression equations were estimated: one for coach behaviors and one for team behaviors. The effects were plotted in Figures 1 and 2, where the dots are estimates and the horizontal lines are 95% confidence intervals.



Figure 1: Effects of Coach Behavior on Player Satisfaction

Figure 1 shows that coach communication was the most important contributor to satisfaction. Other factors equal, satisfaction was 19 points higher (on a 100 point scale) when coaches complimented their players, than when coaches never or rarely offered compliments. Likewise, players felt substantially more satisfied when coaches gave constructive criticism or asked for 100% effort. The effects of social guidance were mixed: satisfaction was higher when coaches taught sportsmanship, but not when they taught conflict management. Finally, satisfaction was higher when coaches encouraged or reassured players who made mistakes, but not when coaches responded in other ways.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What can youth girls soccer teams in the Bay Area do to increase their team cohesion and overall satisfaction?

HYPOTHESES

Building on previous research, this AAR project examines how various behaviors by coaches and teammates affect the satisfaction of soccer players. The study tests the following hypotheses, which were inspired by personal experience, discussions with players, and review literature.

Hypotheses about communication: Coaches and teammates can increase the satisfaction of players by giving compliments, offering constructive criticism, and asking for 100% effort.

Hypotheses about social guidance/activities: Coaches can increase satisfaction by teaching sportsmanship and conflict management. Teammates can increase satisfaction by setting team goals and doing team building activities, but forming cliques should have the opposite effect.

Hypotheses about responses to mistakes: Encouragement and reassurance should increase satisfaction. Yelling and pulling players out should decrease satisfaction.

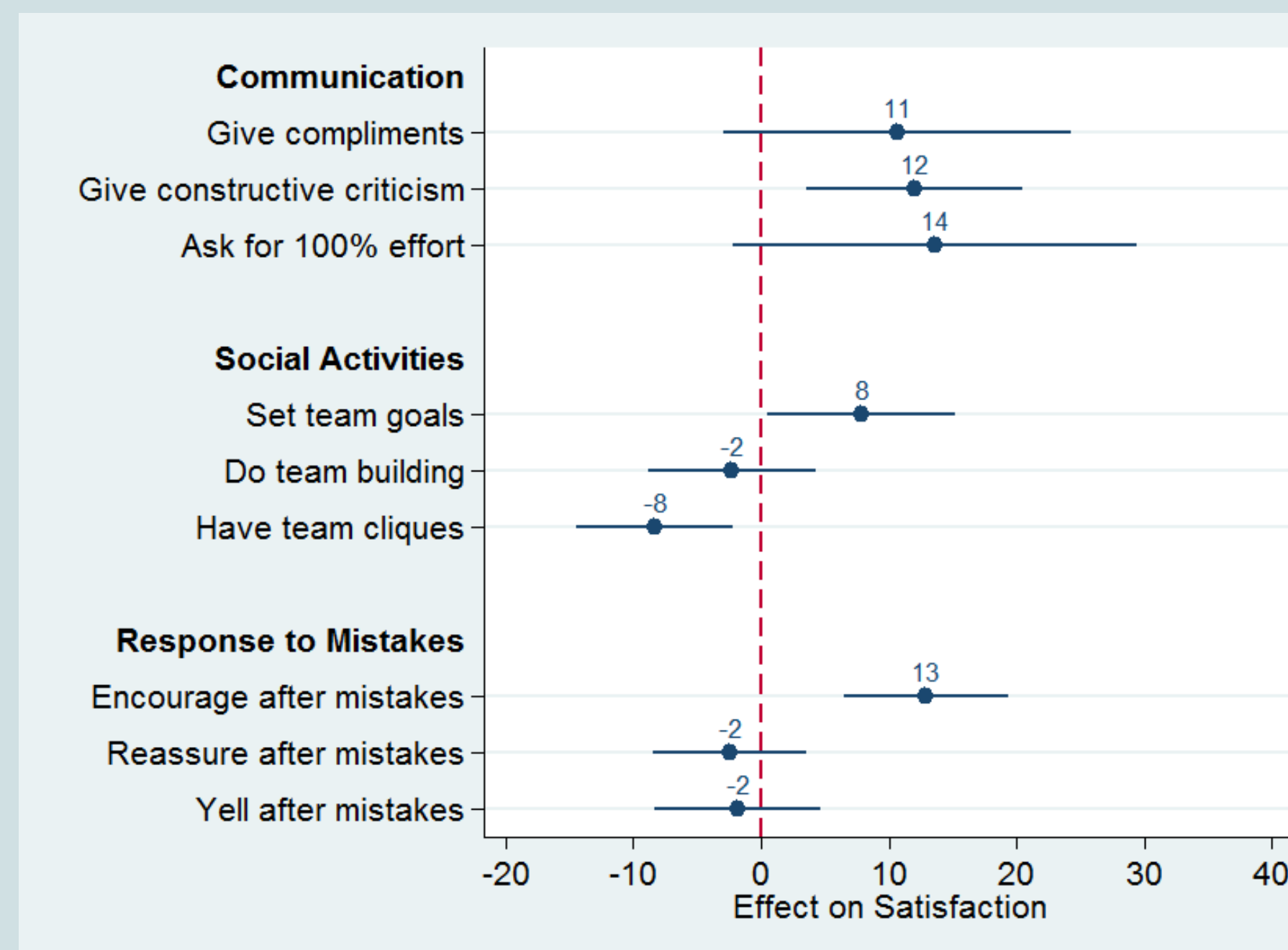


Figure 2: Effects of Team Behavior on Player Satisfaction

Figure 2 shows that team communication, like coach communication, contributes substantially to satisfaction. All three forms of communication increased satisfaction by 11-14 points, though the confidence intervals around these estimates were wide and sometimes overlapped zero. Among the social activities, setting team goals increased satisfaction, team building activities proved ineffective, and team cliques decreased satisfaction. Finally, satisfaction was higher when teammates encouraged each other after mistakes, but not in response to other strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Step 1: Questionnaire

A club team survey and a high school team survey were created, each with identical questions. If players selected that they play for only one of these teams, they were given the corresponding survey. If they selected both, they were randomly assigned to either the club or high school team survey.

Dependent Variable:

Participants expressed their level of satisfaction with the soccer team by choosing from 7 options that ranged from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied.

Independent Variables:

The survey included questions about the how their coaches and teammates communicated, engaged in social activities, and responded to makes.

Step 2: Survey Distribution

High School:

Collect names of high schools in Bay Area → Conduct SRS of 50 schools → Email coaches and/or athletic directors → SRS of more high schools if not enough responses

Club:

Collect names of club teams in Bay Area → Email as many club coaches/directors as possible → Email coaches known personally → Email more if not enough club player responses

Other:

The survey was shared on several forms of social media. It was also shared individually with familiar club and high school teammates, who send it to their teams.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase player satisfaction and create a better team environment, coaches should adapt their coaching methods by proactively enhancing team communication and cohesion through the behaviors highlighted in this study. Coaches should also encourage their players to behave similarly toward each other through these behaviors. These include, but are not limited to:

- Give compliments
- Encourage after mistakes
- Ask for 100% effort
- Teach sportsmanship
- Give constructive criticism
- Set team goals

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