



The Impact of Team Cohesion on the Social Prestige of Competitive Sports Clubs in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

Background and Aim: University sports clubs contribute to student development and institutional reputation, yet the link between team cohesion and clubs' perceived external prestige remains underexamined in China. This study tests whether team cohesion is associated with higher perceived external prestige among competitive sports clubs in Chinese universities.

Methodology: The total population size is 2,777 members. According to the Krejcie and Morgan Table, when the population size $N=2,777$, the recommended sample size $S=338$. This study plans to sample 338 participants, exceeding the recommended sample size, ensuring the sample's diversity and representativeness. For this study's quantitative survey, questionnaire data will be collected from 338 participants, including club members, captains, and coaches. The questionnaire will be used primarily to measure levels of team cohesion and social prestige.

Results: The Mean and Standard Deviation of the Current Team Cohesion of Competitive Sport Clubs in Chinese Universities. As in the table of contents, by analyzing the descriptive statistics of each variable, this paper can further reveal the characteristics of respondents' ratings on different dimensions and provide a basis for subsequent analyses

Conclusion: Cohesive teams are perceived as more prestigious externally, particularly in team sport clubs. Strengthening communication, shared goals, and supportive climates may thus enhance clubs' reputational capital and access to resources.

Keywords: Team Cohesion; Perceived External Prestige; University Sports Clubs; Mixed-methods; China

Introduction

Introduction opening: Competitive sports clubs have become prominent actors in Chinese universities, shaping students' physical, psychological, and social development and contributing to institutional image. While club performance often draws attention, the reputational value that clubs create in how external audiences view and value the club and, by extension, the university, remains less understood. This study addresses a specific gap: whether, and to what extent, the





internal dynamics of cohesion within clubs translate into perceived external prestige (PEP). Building on cohesion theory in sport and organizational reputation research, we propose and test a multilevel model linking task and social cohesion to PEP across 40 clubs in 10 universities, augmented by qualitative insights into the mechanisms of communication and support. Jumps between campus culture and globalization without a coherent problem statement; weak or off-topic citations; lacks a clear gap; contains machine-translation artifacts (“jittery sound playback” later in the paper points to translation issues more broadly). As an important part of campus culture and physical education, competitive sport clubs in Chinese universities have played an increasingly important role in recent years in promoting students' physical fitness, mental health, and team spirit. (Stidder & Hayes, 2011) Especially in the current society, as competitive sports are increasingly becoming part of campus culture, (Ben-Naim, Et al 2006) the influence of sport clubs is not only reflected in their athletic performance, but also in their shaping of the social prestige of colleges and universities (Ahong, & Mahamud, 2022) explore the impact of team cohesion on the social prestige of competitive sport clubs in Chinese universities (Chu, 2015) the construction of university culture. Meanwhile, (Qiu & Zhai, 2022) this study will also combine international experience to provide valuable the globalization of sports in Chinese universities. (Tan & Bairner, 2010) practical context and importance; team cohesion plays a crucial role in the operation of sports clubs. Team cohesion refers to mutual trust, collaboration, and the alignment of members with shared team goals. Strong team cohesion enhances individual performance and collective unity, ultimately improving a club's overall effectiveness and reputation (Li, Wang, & Chen, 2023). How to evaluate the team cohesion of competitive sports clubs in Chinese universities, theoretical framing, and gap; reflection of the image and influence of universities in society, which mainly includes the club's reputation, popularity, tournament results, student participation, and other dimensions. How to measure and evaluate the social prestige of sports clubs objectively and scientifically is another key issue in this study, specifically the research question of team cohesion and social prestige of sports clubs. Although team cohesion and social prestige have an important place in team management and reputation management, respectively, their interrelationships have not been adequately studied.

Brief preview of design and findings: university sports clubs have already gained some experience in social prestige enhancement. How to specifically achieve social prestige enhancement by improving team cohesion is still a practical issue that needs to be studied urgently. University administrators and sports club leaders still lack specific theoretical guidance and operational manuals on how to improve team cohesion.





Objectives

1. To study the Mean and Standard Deviation of the Current Team Cohesion of Competitive Sport Clubs in Chinese universities.

Literature Review

The purpose is to review the existing literature on the relationship between team cohesion and social prestige, with a particular focus on the context of sport clubs in Chinese universities. (Hayhoe, 2016) Key concepts such as Chinese universities, team cohesion, and social prestige will be discussed. By reviewing the relevant literature, this chapter aims to provide a theoretical basis for understanding how team cohesion affects the social prestige of university sport clubs. (Ye et al., 2021). Sport clubs, as an organizational form, involve the intersection of multiple disciplines, including studies in the fields of sport management, sociology, and psychology, but also reflect the functions of physical activity and social interaction. (Knoppers, 2015)

The function of sports clubs can be analyzed from several dimensions. First, it is a platform for providing sports activities aimed at enhancing the physical health and athleticism of its members. (Paffenbarger & Lee, 1998) Secondly, sports clubs are also a social place where members make connections, share experiences, and form a stable social network. In addition, sports clubs have social responsibilities, including the promotion of social sports and participation in public welfare activities. The enhancement of team cohesion in sports clubs in terms of strategies has focused on the following aspects: team building, leadership roles, culture creation, and incentives. These strategies have been deeply analyzed and verified at both.



Conceptual Framework

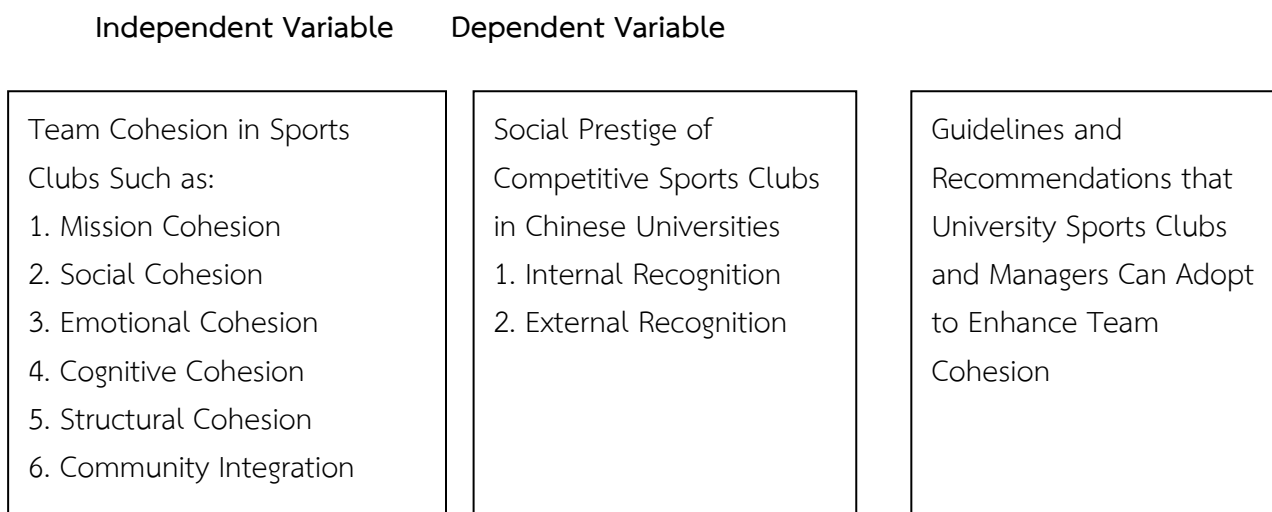


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Population size (N): The target population of this study needs to be clearly defined. For example, the population may consist of all members, captains, and coaches of university sports clubs. Confidence level: Typically, a 95% confidence level is chosen, indicating the confidence in the sample statistics representing the population parameters. Margin of error: Usually set at $\pm 5\%$. Based on the research plan, four sports clubs are selected from each university, with a total of 10 universities participating. The total population size is 2,777 members. According to the Krejcie and Morgan Table, when the population size $N=2,777$, the recommended sample size $S=338$. This study plans to sample 338 participants, exceeding the recommended sample size, ensuring the sample's diversity and representativeness. For this study's quantitative survey, questionnaire data will be collected from 338 participants, including club members, captains, and coaches. The questionnaire will be used primarily to measure levels of team cohesion and social prestige.

Research Results

The Mean and Standard Deviation of the Current Team Cohesion of Competitive Sport Clubs in Chinese Universities. As in the table of contents, by analyzing the descriptive statistics of each variable, this paper can further reveal the characteristics of respondents' ratings on different dimensions and provide a basis for subsequent analyses. This study analyses the mean, standard



deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of each variable in turn, and explores their meanings and characteristics of the data distribution.

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Current Team Cohesion

	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistics	SE	Statistics	SE
Mission Cohesion	3.209	1.181	-.125	.133	-1.154	.265
Social Cohesion	3.112	.976	.045	.133	-.874	.265
Emotional Cohesion	3.232	1.019	-.175	.133	-1.095	.265
Cognitive Cohesion	3.275	.922	-.215	.133	-.930	.265
Structural Cohesion	3.301	.752	-.424	.133	-.098	.265
Community Integration	3.187	.816	-.063	.133	-.531	.265
Team Cohesion	3.220	.738	-.004	.133	-1.046	.265

1) Mission Cohesion

Mission cohesion reflects the degree to which team members are united in accomplishing a common task. It measures the identification of team goals and tasks among team members as well as the degree of collaboration among team members in task execution. In this study, the mean value of Mission Cohesion was 3.209, which was slightly higher than the neutral value, indicating that respondents rated mission cohesion more positively overall and believed that team members collaborated well in task completion. However, the standard deviation of Mission Cohesion was 1.181, indicating that respondents' ratings on this dimension varied widely. Some respondents felt that mission cohesion was very strong, while others may have felt that the team was less collaborative in task performance. The skewness (-0.125) and kurtosis (-1.154) indicate a more symmetrical distribution of data for this dimension and no significant extremes.

2) Social cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the strength of social ties and relationships among team members. It emphasizes the mutual support and interaction between team members, reflecting the social atmosphere within the team and the degree of closeness between members. The mean value of



Social Cohesion is 3.112, which is slightly lower than the neutral value, suggesting that the majority of respondents believe that there is a certain degree of social cohesion in the team, but it does not reach a very strong level. The standard deviation was 0.976, indicating that there was some variation in respondents' opinions in the assessment of social cohesion, with some members possibly feeling that the team was more tightly knit, while others felt that there was less interaction between team members. The skewness is 0.045, which is close to 0, showing a more balanced distribution of evaluations. The kurtosis is -0.874, indicating a relatively flat data distribution with no significant concentration trend in the evaluations.

3) Emotional cohesion

Emotional cohesion refers to the emotional interdependence and support of team members, emphasizing the emotional connection between members as well as the emotional resonance of the team. The mean value of Emotional Cohesion is 3.232, with a higher score indicating that the majority of respondents believe that the team's emotional cohesion is stronger and that there exists better emotional support and trust between members. The standard deviation of 1.019 indicates that there is a wide range of opinions among the respondents on the evaluation of emotional cohesion. Some may believe that the emotional connection of the team is very strong, while others may feel that the emotional connection between team members is weak. A skewness of -0.175, close to 0, indicates a more symmetrical distribution of data, with the overall ratings skewed towards the high end of the scale. The kurtosis is -1.095, indicating that the ratings of emotional cohesion are flatter, with fewer extremes.

4) Cognitive Cohesion

Cognitive cohesion refers to the degree to which team members are aligned in their understanding of mission goals, strategies, and work. It involves a shared understanding and coordination among team members at the cognitive level. The mean value of Cognitive Cohesion was 3.275, and the higher mean score indicates that respondents generally perceived that the team was better aligned at the cognitive level and that members had a more unified understanding of the goals and strategies. The standard deviation is 0.922, which indicates that there is less difference in the opinion of the respondents on the evaluation of cognitive cohesion, and most of them think that the team is better unified on the cognitive level. The skewness is -0.215, indicating that the ratings are slightly skewed towards the higher end of the scale, and the bias is not significant. With a kurtosis of -0.930, the data distribution is relatively flat with fewer extreme ratings.

5) Structural Cohesion

Structural cohesion refers to the degree of clarity of structure, roles, and rules within a team, and the sense of role identity of members within this structure. It emphasizes the

contribution of the team's organizational structure to structural cohesion. The mean of Structural Cohesion was 3.301, a high mean indicating that the majority of respondents perceived the structure of the team to be clearer and that team members had clear role cognitions within the structure. The standard deviation was 0.752, indicating that most respondents were more consistent in their assessment of structural cohesion, and the smaller standard deviation implies that the structural factors of the team are more stable. The skewness is -0.424, slightly skewed towards the higher end of the scale. The kurtosis is -0.098, indicating a relatively flat data distribution and relatively balanced ratings.

6) Community Integration

Community integration refers to the coordination of relationships between team members and the degree of team cohesion. It emphasizes the interdependence and co-operation between team members. The mean value of Community Integration is 3.187, which is slightly higher than the neutral value, indicating that the majority of respondents believe that the team is more integrated and that there is a better cooperative relationship between members. The standard deviation is 0.816, which indicates that the differences in the ratings are small, suggesting that most respondents believe that the team is better integrated. The skewness is -0.063, which is close to 0, indicating a more symmetrical data distribution. The kurtosis is -0.531, with a flat data distribution and a more even distribution of ratings.

Discussion

The study aimed to explore the level and dimensions of team cohesion, the factors influencing social prestige, and the relationship between cohesion and prestige in higher education sports clubs in China. The data were based on the written responses of 338 members of university students' competitive sports clubs and staff. The primary research tool was a multidimensional questionnaire to assess levels and sub-levels of cohesion, which included mission cohesion, social cohesion, emotional cohesion, cognitive cohesion, structural cohesion, group integration, and team cohesion in total.

The mean scores for all the questionnaires indicate a moderately high level of cohesion as they are slightly above the neutral point. The highest scores are structural cohesion, cognitive cohesion, and emotional cohesion, which are characteristic of the team members' demonstrated high role identification, task comprehension, and emotional support. The most common understanding of cohesion is multidimensional (Chang, Duck, & Bordia, 2006). The study results are in line with Chang, Duck, and Bordia (2006) in considering team cohesion as a phenomenon containing task- and emotion-related dimensions. Black, Smith, and Thomas (2019) also point out



that emotional unity and members' understanding of each other are the basis for the success of teams.

The lower score was shown in the social cohesion, which shows that, even though the team members identify with each other in their missions, structure, and emotions, they still should work on building and improving their social interactions. The small standard deviation across all the scales, except for group integration, emotional cohesion, and mission cohesion, shows that the team members had close responses to the questionnaires' items and, therefore, had similar criteria for evaluating their teams. The relatively high standard deviations for mission and emotional cohesion are likely to be due to team members' different views on task collaboration and emotional unity (Evans, Piggott, & Manley, 2024). The highest standard deviation is group integration, which is in agreement with Black, Smith, and Thomas (2019), who consider the stability of cohesion to be influenced by the degree of personal motivation and identity.

As a result of the interviews, it was found that cohesion has a positive effect on training and competition efficiency, students' and staff's morale and motivation, member loyalty and belonging, and communication and management in university sports clubs. The first four are likely to promote the team's competitive performance, while the last two functions serve as the basis for the positive organizational culture formation. The results are similar to those of Li, Wang, and Chen (2023), who found that leadership style based on the trust and cohesion promotion has a positive impact on collective performance and organizational reputation in higher education sports clubs. Furthermore, the results show that the more highly cohesive the team is, the better it can handle external pressure and the more adaptable and stable it is in a changing environment. The finding supports previous studies such as those by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), who point out that trust and cohesion are among the main mediating factors between organizational structure and performance.

The study also found that the higher the cohesion, the better the team culture, resource sharing, and recognition, which likely results in a higher social prestige of the sports club. This supports Robbins and Judge (2016), who hold that cohesive teams tend to have a higher social capital and more institutional visibility. Thus, team cohesion may have a significant impact not only on the team's competitive performance but also on its organizational identity and sustainability.

As a result of the study, it was found that there were still challenges to the team cohesion formation. They included such problems as the contradiction between individualism and collectivism, the lack of communication and trust, cultural and personality diversity, the dual burden of academic and sports training, and the lack of external resources. It is no surprise that the mentioned contradictions and diversity challenges affect cohesion since Christie, Jordan, and





Troth (2015) found that a lack of or imbalance in affective and cognitive trust, as well as cognitive trust and communication, are the reasons for the teams' integrity weakening. Kao, Wu, and Lin (2019) also point out that teams with high performance pressure tend to have lower levels of relational trust, which leads to reduced long-term cohesion.

To overcome these limitations, some of the ways include promoting collectivist awareness, strengthening the communication system, introducing cultural inclusivity education, and ensuring a reasonable distribution of resources. Mach, Dolan, and Tzafrir (2010) found that the right balance of trust, communication, and clarity of the structure significantly benefits team integration.

To conclude, the level of team cohesion among the members of university students' competitive sports clubs and staff is higher than medium. Team cohesion has such functions as promoting training and competition efficiency, member morale and motivation, loyalty and belonging, and communication and management in higher education sports clubs. The factors that affect team cohesion formation include the contradiction between individualism and collectivism, the lack of communication and trust, cultural and personality diversity, the dual burden of academic and sports training, and the lack of external resources. In future studies, it is suggested to find methods to increase social cohesion, communication, collaboration, and external support for sports clubs, which will likely lead to higher overall stability and stronger competitive performance. These findings are of practical importance since they show that both emotion and the structure of team cohesion are interdependent and need to be developed simultaneously (Li et al., 2023; Evans et al., 2024).

Recommendation

Applying Research Recommendations

1) Enriching the theoretical research dimension of team cohesion and social prestige

This study introduces the concepts of 'team cohesion' and 'social prestige' into the research system of higher education Competitive sport clubs, and suggests that there is a significant positive correlation between the two. This provides a new research path for sports management and organizational behavior and helps to build a more complete theoretical framework to further explain the interaction between the social functions and internal dynamics of sports organizations.

2) Providing empirical information for sport management teaching and case studies

The data of this study are based on the questionnaire survey and difference analysis, and the results are representative and credible, which can be used as the teaching cases of sports management, education, and other related courses in higher education to help students learn



how to design variables, analyze data, and interpret conclusions from empirical research, and enhance their research ability and practical cognition.

3) Promote the optimization of the organizational structure of higher education competitive sports

The significant relationship between team cohesion and social prestige suggests that improving the internal cohesion of an organization contributes to external image building. Therefore, higher education sports clubs can enhance their internal cohesion by optimizing their organizational structure, clarifying the division of responsibilities, setting up a special fund for team building, and organizing group training and psychological counseling to increase public recognition of them.

4) Providing strategic suggestions for campus sports brand building

The study found that large-scale higher education institutions have advantages in social prestige and cohesion, which reveals that small and medium-sized higher education institutions can shape unique sports brands through differentiated brand positioning, event marketing planning, cross-campus cooperation, and other strategies to enhance social recognition and influence, and then improve the overall image of the university.

5) Strengthening the Research Perspective on the Integration of Sports and Campus Culture

Sports are not only a competition, but also an important part of cultural construction. Enhancing sports team cohesion can subconsciously promote the formation and dissemination of campus spirit and enhance the sense of belonging of teachers and students. Therefore, the research results can provide a theoretical basis and a path reference for promoting the implementation of the mechanism of sports education.

6) Research on the mechanism of promoting the sharing and alliance of sports resources among higher education institutions

The results of the analysis of the regional and university scale in this study show that the resource difference between different schools has a significant impact. In the future, universities can draw on the cooperation mechanism of 'regional sports alliance' and 'intercollegiate exchange league' to share resources and complement each other's strengths, to increase the overall level of competition and social attention. In the future, colleges and universities can learn from cooperation mechanisms such as 'regional sports league' and 'inter-school exchange league' to share resources and complement each other's strengths, to improve the overall level of competition and social attention.

7) Stimulate the re-understanding of the social function of competitive sports

While traditional perspectives judge the value of clubs by their competitive performance, this study emphasizes the impact of team cohesion on social reputation, which reminds



administrators and policy makers that higher education sports are not only a platform for talent competition, but also an important carrier of the school's external communication power, and more attention should be paid to it in the allocation of resources and strategic design.

Future Studies Recommendation

Expanding research samples and coverage

The current research sample is mainly concentrated in some eastern and central higher education institutions, and future research should increase the samples from less developed western regions, higher vocational colleges and universities, and ethnic colleges and universities, to enhance the representativeness and replication value of the study, and to identify the potential influences of geography and economy on cohesion and reputation. By increasing the sample of different types of schools, the study can reveal more comprehensively the differences in team cohesion and social prestige among various types of schools and provide more generalized management recommendations. In addition, the strength and influence of higher education in different sectors (e.g., sports colleges vs. non-sports colleges) on Competitive sport clubs can also be examined, further enriching the diversity of the sample and the depth of the study.

Adoption of the longitudinal tracking research method

Existing studies are cross-sectional data, which makes it difficult to observe the dynamic changes in the evolution of variables over time. In the future, the causal relationship between cohesion building and changes in prestige can be studied by tracking data from multiple semesters or even academic years of the same club, which can provide a basis for policy adjustment and management practice in the time dimension. Through longitudinal data, it is possible to reveal the trends of team cohesion and social prestige over time and further identify the key factors affecting their changes. The longitudinal tracking study not only helps to measure the process of cohesion improvement more accurately, but also helps us to judge the specific impact of management strategies and team activities on the long-term development of the club.

Introducing a multi-stakeholder perspective

The current research object is students in higher education, and in the future, it can be expanded to multiple groups such as coaches, managers, students' parents, sponsors, alumni, etc., to comprehensively analyze the cognitive cohesion and reputation of clubs as perceived and evaluated by different stakeholders, and to construct a more complete ecological research model. Differences in the roles and perceptions of various stakeholders in club development deserve attention. For example, coaches may focus more on competitive results and member performance, while students may focus on team culture and group activities. Through a multifaceted perspective, a more comprehensive understanding of the internal and external





influences on team cohesion and social reputation can be gained, ensuring that the research results are more comprehensive and practical.

Data collection and analysis by combining new media platforms

The current influence of social media on public opinion and brand building is increasingly significant. In the future, we can introduce data such as microblogging heat, jittery sound playback, and WeChat public number reading, combined with text analysis and sentiment analysis techniques, to study the social reputation performance and change trends of higher education sports clubs on online platforms. As an important channel for information dissemination, social media plays a key role in shaping brand image. By analyzing the discussions and interactions on social media, the social influence and public image of higher education sports clubs can be effectively assessed. Meanwhile, sentiment analysis can help researchers understand the public's emotional tendency towards the club, further revealing the dynamic change of social prestige.

Constructing an analysis framework integrating multiple theories

Social capital theory, organizational commitment theory, social identity theory, etc., can be integrated into the study of team cohesion to explore the multiple components of the influence mechanism of the psychological level, cultural level, and institutional level on sports organizations, to improve the depth of the study and academic explanatory power. Applying a multi-theoretical framework to the study of cohesion and reputation in sports clubs can help identify and explain how factors at different levels intertwine to influence team cohesion and external identity. For example, social capital theory can explain how trust and cooperation among members contribute to team cohesion, and organizational commitment theory can reveal how members' loyalty to the club affects their performance in the club and the maintenance of their external image.

Establishing a performance assessment system for higher education sports

The variables of this study can be used as one of the performance assessment indicators, and future studies can explore how team cohesion, social reputation, and member satisfaction can be incorporated into the performance assessment system of higher education sports to promote the standardization and scientification of the sports management system. Building a scientific performance assessment system can help higher education sports management departments to quantify and evaluate the operational effects of clubs in the decision-making process and further promote the sustainable development of sports clubs. In addition, the establishment of a sports performance evaluation system can also provide a strong basis for higher education to improve sports management and enhance the overall sports level and social influence.





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