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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### CROSS-GENDER COACHING AND TEAM DYNAMICS AMONG FEMALE BASKETBALL ATHLETES IN SELECTED MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN TONGLIAO CITY, INNER MONGOLIA AUTONOMOUS REGION

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#### Abstract

The study sought to find male coaches' cross-gender coaching strategies and their impact on team dynamics of a female basketball team. Apart from ascertaining important elements of team dynamics, which comprise coaching strategies, player coordination, cultural diversity, monitoring systems, and training loads, the study aimed to gauge the opinions of female players toward coaching practices, including gender equity, decision-making, communication style, and leadership. The replies were from 75 female basketball players overall. There was descriptive comparative correlational design used. Using a survey form, the data were compiled from respondents with varying grade levels, years of sports background, and athlete status- beginner, intermediate, advanced, and elite. The regions with noteworthy relationships and those for development were found using statistical techniques including mean scores, profile-based comparisons, and correlation studies. The findings show that male coaches' approaches, which excel in methods for gender equality and customizing procedures to the players, are generally considered as dynamic and inclusive in character. Still, there are challenges to overcome preconceptions, have good communication, and divide training responsibilities. Beginning and professional athletes have very diverse profiles, which emphasizes the need of varied coaching techniques. While pointing up communication and integrating monitoring systems, correlation analysis found some relationships between cultural diversity and athlete performance and between cooperative decision-making and player coordination as well as between these factors. Based on the results, a Cross-Gender Coaching Integration Plan was developed including targeted activities to close the found gaps, advance inclusion, and enhance team chemistry.

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**Introduction:-**

Sports coaching is a vital domain that significantly contributes to the advancement and achievement of players and teams. In this context, two fundamental notions emerge as essential for comprehending the intricacies of sports coaching: cross-gender coaching and coaching female basketball. These concepts, albeit separate, are intrinsically linked, each providing significant insights into the obstacles and opportunities faced by athletes and coaches in the dynamic realm of sports coaching.

Cross-gender coaching revolves around coaching situations where coaches and athletes belong to different genders. This phenomenon manifests in various ways, including male coaches guiding female athletes or, conversely, female coaches overseeing male athletes. While coaching itself is a universal art, the dynamics that emerge when coaches and athletes hail from divergent gender backgrounds can be profound. The influence of gender stereotypes and biases, in particular, can significantly impact the coaching relationship and athlete development. Research has underscored the potential challenges that male coaches may encounter in comprehending the unique needs and experiences of female athletes, which can, in turn, affect communication and rapport (Prodanov et al., 2022). On the other hand, female athletes may face hurdles in establishing connections with coaches of a different gender, ultimately shaping their overall coaching experience.

Simultaneously, coaching female basketball represents a specialized dimension within sports coaching, centering explicitly on the coaching of women's basketball teams. This specialization acknowledges the unique dynamics and considerations that come into play when working with female athletes in a basketball context. The coaching strategies, training methodologies, and leadership styles employed in women's basketball are informed by a myriad of factors, including the distinct nature of the sport and the needs of female athletes. Navigating this specialized arena requires coaches to possess a nuanced understanding of both the sport itself and the gender-specific dynamics that may influence coaching effectiveness.

Moreover, team dynamics, a fundamental aspect of sports performance, encompass the intricate web of interactions, behaviors, and relationships among team members. These dynamics extend beyond the boundaries of gender, impacting the overall functioning and success of the team. Elements such as coaching strategies, player coordination, cultural diversity, monitoring systems, and training loads all play pivotal roles in shaping team dynamics (Eluère et al., 2023; Abernethy et al., 2022; Ciocoiu & Tiron, 2020; Villagrasa, 2013; Fujii, 2021; Koryahin, 2022). The intricacies of team dynamics reveal themselves as a multifaceted and ever-evolving phenomenon, influenced by a myriad of internal and external factors.

In China, female athletes are usually perceived and treated based on gender stereotypes and cultural norms. Such stereotypes may manifest themselves into biases concerning coaching, training, and even recruitment. Assuming roles of a coach, one must have a good understanding of cultural nuances and be able to address them if a coach wants to give the best coaching experience to female athletes.

The researcher comes from a sincere dedication to the growth and development of the sport of basketball. Basketball transcends being a mere game, serving as a powerful platform for fostering empowerment, teamwork, and personal growth. The belief is held strongly that every individual, regardless of gender, deserves equal opportunities to excel in their chosen sport. However, the researcher's experiences coaching a female team in China revealed certain challenges and hurdles that female athletes and coaches encounter in the realm of sports.

This study aims to determine interplay between cross-gender coaching practices and the dynamics of female basketball teams. By exploring these interconnected facets, the researcher will aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of how gender dynamics, coaching strategies, and team interactions converge in the unique context of female basketball.

**Statement of the Problem**

What is the assessment of the respondents on the cross-gender coaching practices of male coaches in a female basketball team in terms of:

1. gender stereotypes and bias;
2. communication styles;

3. athlete performance;
4. coach recruitment ;
5. gender equity;
6. decision-making;
7. leadership?

What is the assessment of the respondents on the team dynamics of female basketball team in terms of:

1. coaching strategies;
2. player coordination;
3. cultural diversity;
4. monitoring systems;
5. training loads?

Is there a correlation between the assessment of the respondents on the cross-gender coaching practices of male coaches and the assessment of the respondents on the team dynamics of female basketball team?

### **Research Methodology:-**

A quantitative comparative correlational research design was employed to investigate the relationships and potential differences between various variables related to cross-gender coaching practices and team dynamics within a female basketball team. This research design was deemed essential for several reasons. The locale of this study was conducted at a Middle School in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. It is situated in the eastern part of Inner Mongolia and is known for its diverse culture and vibrant community. The Middle School chosen for this research is known for its commitment to promoting sports and athletic development among its students. For this study, a total enumeration technique was employed to select 75 female participants who were members of the female basketball team.

The research-made instrument for this study was a questionnaire divided into 3 parts, each focusing on specific aspects: Part 1 covered the profile of the participants. Part 2 assessed how participants perceived coaching by male coaches in a female basketball team, including gender bias, communication styles, athlete performance, coach recruitment, gender equity, decision-making, and leadership. Finally, Part 3 assessed team dynamics within the female basketball team, including coaching strategies, player coordination, cultural diversity, monitoring systems, and training loads. Throughout the research process, the instrument's validity and reliability (.850) were continually scrutinized and assessed to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data collected. Validity was established through content validity and construct validity, while reliability was evaluated through internal consistency measures, including Cronbach's alpha and test-retest reliability.

### **Results and Discussion:-**

The results are informative about various men's assessments of cross-gender coaching practices among male coaches in female basketball teams going through various dimensions. The overall weighted mean of 2.97, with a low standard deviation of 0.15, indicated that respondents generally "agree" these practices are "practiced," giving a moderately positive outlook towards male coaching efforts in the provision of an inclusive and effective coaching atmosphere.

Among the seven indicators, decision-making scored the highest with a weighted mean of 3.09 and a standard deviation of 0.26; respondents strongly acknowledged that male coaches' collaborative and transparent decision-making approaches are seen as paramount to team cohesion and inclusiveness. Athletes' performance followed next with a weighted mean of 3.03, indicating that male coaches are thought to be moderately effective in promoting both the development and success of their players while also being equitable in their expectations to perform.

Gender equity is next in weight with a mean of 2.97, implying respondents agree that male coaches encourage gender equity and all-around fairness within the team. Communication style and leadership come next with a tie for fourth place, each with a mean of 2.96: the results suggest that male coaches are

perceived to have moderate communication and leadership skills that permit understanding and develop a good culture within their teams, yet these areas could benefit from further improvement.

Sixth comes gender-related stereotype and bias, which had a weighted mean of 2.95; this means that while respondents see some effort on the part of male coaches to address and deal with gender bias, acknowledging that in some cases concealed biases might still be affecting some interactions or perceptions toward those incidents. In the last position, coach recruitment offered the lowest mean score of 2.85; this raised concerns about the perceived fairness, inclusivity, and transparency of recruitment processes, thereby signaling one potent area that is in urgent need of improvement.

Considering the relatively low standard deviations recorded among all indicators in the study, it reflects consistent perceptions on the part of the respondents, suggesting that male coaches' cross-gender practices were a common experience among this cohort. However, a closely defined range of weighted means indicates that comprehensive improvements are warranted and should be targeted towards enhancing effectiveness and inclusiveness on all fronts.

In conclusion, the findings highlight that male coaches utilize cross-gender coaching practices quite moderately in terms of decision-making and athlete performance. In contrast, coach recruitment, confronting gender stereotypes, and improving communication and leadership styles really require enhancement. These findings illustrate the need for continued professional development and special projects to enhance the capacity of male coaches to respond to the specific needs of female basketball teams to build an inclusive, equitable, and supportive coaching environment.

The study shows the respondents' assessment on the team dynamics of the female basketball club with reference to five constructs, to wit: coaching strategy, player coordination, cultural diversity, monitoring systems, and training loads. From the said constructs, the overall weighted mean of 3.05 has a standard deviation of 0.16; hence, such that respondents 'agree' that team dynamics are 'dynamic,' implying that there is general a positive judgment of these constructs within the team.

The weighted mean of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 0.38 present the highest dimension, which is the Monitoring Systems. This result underscores the responsibility many monitoring systems have with respect to optimizing the performance, prevention of injuries, and well-being of players. Effective integration of the monitoring systems into the team operations of the respondents highlights this being an outstanding area in the management and development of the team.

Cultural Diversity, second with a weighted mean of 3.03 and a standard deviation of 0.31, speaks to the value attached by the team to inclusivity and respect as positive factors influencing interpersonal relationships in the group. While viewed positively by players, cultural diversity could further enhance opportunities for emphasizing and celebrating the unique contribution of each diverse player.

In third place is Training Loads with a weighted mean of 3.02 and a standard deviation of 0.40. Respondents and interviewees recognize the balance established in almost all training regimen dimensions with reference to individual player capacity and team goals. However, the results suggest there is room to further optimize training loads, ensuring they are both challenging and sustainable for peak performance.

Coaching Strategies places fourth with a weighted mean of 3.01 and standard deviation of 0.33. It represents a positive view of the aspects of coaching strategy in terms of adaptability and individualization. However, there were also opportunities for improvement concerning clearer communication and more consistent strategizing for better implementation and impacts in the performance of the team.

By a weighted mean of 2.94 and standard deviation of 0.34, this Power Player Coordination dimension is considered the lowest rated. Although it "Dynamic" still indicates that the coordination among the given players is an area to improve upon, particularly regarding teamwork consistency and some occasional coordination difficulties in games.

From the lower standard deviations, it can be concluded that perceptions are similar among all respondents concerning most dimensions but differed slightly on some aspects. Such similarities typify a common understanding and experience as regards team dynamics among the members of the unit.

It could be said that the results show a strong team dynamics, especially in monitoring systems as well as having cultural diversity. Room for improvement remains associated with player coordination, coaching strategies, and training loads. These areas can be developed to further build cohesiveness within the team and to augment overall performance both on and off the court.

Although the total correlation between the two variables was not significant ( $r = 0.013$ ,  $p = 0.915$ ), data shows high correlations in certain areas, thereby providing information about the influence of different types of coaching on team dynamics. The highest of the weak and non-significant cross-gender coaching strategy-team dynamics correlations indicate that respondents do not recognize a strong overall relationship between these variables. Variables such as Gender Stereotypes and Bias, Athlete Performance, and Coach Recruitment had no discernible relationships with team dynamics such as Coaching Strategies, Player Coordination, Cultural Diversity, Monitoring Systems, or Training Loads. Weak ties imply that team dynamics could be significantly impacted by factors other than cross-gender coaching approaches.

In addition, there were interesting correlations found in certain particular spheres. Importantly, Monitoring Systems showed a negative link with Communication Styles ( $r = -0.275$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ) and a positive correlation with Gender Equity ( $r = 0.246$ ,  $p = 0.033$ ). This emphasizes how two-fold monitoring systems are used in team leadership. Good use of monitoring systems can promote fair practices and help team development; but, poor communication about the data and goals of the systems may hinder their integration and effectiveness.

Cultural Diversity and Athlete Performance has a really strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.273$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ). This suggests that creating a varied and inclusive workplace improves both group and personal performance. It underlines the need of using cultural diversity to build a cohesive and active team in which every member feels valued and ready to participate.

Player coordination and decision-making had a much positive correlation ( $r = 0.354$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). This suggests that team coordination is much influenced by inclusive and cooperative approaches of decision-making. Active participation of players in decision-making procedures improves teamwork and ensures the team runs more effectively both on and off the court.

For Leadership, interesting relationships were found between Training Loades ( $r = -0.308$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ) and Coaching Strategies ( $r = 0.235$ ,  $p = 0.042$ ). Good leadership helps the team to carry out dynamic coaching strategies and therefore meet its goals. The negative link with training loads emphasizes the challenge of balancing leadership with efficient workload control. This suggests that while strong leadership can inspire and guide a team, too high physical demands on players could jeopardize these efforts.

Furthermore, The results show that although cross-gender coaching techniques influence some aspects of team dynamics, their total impact is not always clearly significant. To increase team performance and cohesiveness, coaches should focus on areas with the most important relationships. Giving inclusive decision-making top priority and leveraging cultural variety will help team relationships be much improved, particularly with relation to performance and coordination. Similarly, allowing open discussion about monitoring systems and matching them with fair procedures helps maximize their benefits for the team.

Thus, the necessity of a well-balanced approach is illustrated by the inverse relationships between Training Loads and Leadership. In order to ensure that duties are consistent with the team's objectives and the individual's capabilities, coaches must involve players in discussions regarding training strategies. This method can prevent injury and fatigue while ensuring optimal performance.

### **Conclusion:-**

Overall, most of the respondents see cross-gender coaching practices to be inclusive and effective in fostering fairness as well as promoting gender equity. Among them, collaborative decision making and differentiated approaches are of particular importance. Challenges remain in dealing with underlying gender stereotypes as well as

continuous communication. This points to the need for ongoing professional development of male coaches in addressing the distinctions of female athletes' needs effectively.

Coaching strategies are flexible in terms of adaptability, communication approach, and personalized application to each athlete. These strategies are fundamental to developing trust and cohesion within the group. Areas of improvement, such as consistency and alignment with individual needs, are identified by respondents into which dynamics could be improved within teams to optimize performance results.

The results underscore the intricate relationship between coaching techniques and team dynamics. The general weak association indicates that a broader range of attributes shapes team dynamics, despite the significant impact of methods such as cultural inclusion, group decision-making, and leadership. These findings should be incorporated into coaching strategies, as they emphasize the necessity of creating environments that are inclusive, egalitarian, and motivating in order to enhance personal and team performance. Teams that prioritize these areas can enhance their cohesiveness and performance, thereby cultivating a more dynamic and effective basketball program.

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