



Perceived Impact Influence of Leadership Styles on Team Cohesion: Evidence from Amhara's National Football League

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Abstract

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This study investigated into the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and team cohesion in the Amhara National Football League, Ethiopia. A correlational design was conducted. The Leadership in Sport Scale and the Group Environment Amharic version questionnaire, known for their validity and reliability, were used. The study participants included a sample of 275 participants selected through the census sampling method. Frequency, percentage, correlation, and multiple linear regression analyses (with a significance level of $P < 0.05$) were performed. There was a correlation between most coaches' leadership styles and team cohesion. One of the most striking findings is the strong positive correlation ($r = .482$) between training and instruction and Individual attraction to Group (Task). In contrast, the strong negative correlation ($r = -.485$) between autocratic behavior and individual attraction to a group (Task) suggests a negative relationship. Furthermore, multiple linear regression revealed that the five predictors collectively explained up to 70% of the variance in team cohesion ($F(5, 274) = 12.504, p < .001$). Individual predictor analysis indicated that training and instruction ($\beta = .482, t = 6.913, p < .001$), and Positive Feedback ($\beta = .350, t = 9.077, p < .001$), have a positive impact on team cohesion. On the other hand, Autocratic Behavior ($\beta = -.354, t = 6.380, p < .001$) negatively affected team cohesion. This study found that leadership styles significantly influence team cohesion in the Amhara National Football League. Effective training and instruction positively impact team unity, while autocratic leadership negatively affects it. These factors and positive feedback, accounted for 70% of the variance in team cohesion. Coaches who prioritize effective training & instruction can create a positive team environment that promotes unity and, ultimately, improved performance. Conversely, autocratic leadership styles may hinder team cohesion and negatively influence team dynamics.

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1. Introduction

The development of a successful football team is a complex process similar to collecting a complicated problem. Each player represents a unique piece, and the coach serves as the essential adhesive that binds him or her. The interplay between these individual components, the relationships forged, and the overall group dynamics are subject to constant evolution over time. At the heart of this dynamic lies the relationship between players and coaches. Coaches exert an intense influence on the team's atmosphere, and a positive, supportive environment can significantly enhance players' performance, growth, and overall well-being (Bianco & Eklund, 2001).

Conversely, a negative and stressful environment may contribute to increased player burnout (Davis, Appleby, Davis, Wetherell, & Gustafsson, 2018). Researchers have extensively investigated the concept of team cohesion to comprehend the intricate complexities of group dynamics within sports. This constructs, the most widely studied in the field (Eys & Brawley, 2018), underscores

the significance of unity, trust, and shared commitment among team

members. Empirical evidence has consistently demonstrated the profound impact of team cohesion on team performance and success (Carron & Eys, 2012). A pivotal factor influencing team cohesion is the coach's leadership style. How a coach interacts with players, their decision-making approach, and their ability to cultivate a supportive environment can all contribute to developing strong team bonds (Kim & Cruz, 2016). Effective leadership can also address athletes' fundamental psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leading to enhanced well-being (Jowett, Adie, Bartholomew, Yang, Gustafsson, & López-Jiménez, 2017).

Research consistently underscores the critical role of team cohesion in athletic achievement. Studies by Carron et al. (2002), Carron et al. (2012), Filho et al. (2014), and Eys & Brawley (2018) have demonstrated the positive influence of cohesion on team performance, alongside factors such as self-efficacy, well-being, satisfaction, interpersonal trust, and stress



management. Recognizing the significance of cohesion, researchers and practitioners have dedicated efforts to develop strategies for enhancing and fostering it within sports teams (Bruner et al., 2013).

The coach, as the team leader, is widely acknowledged as a pivotal figure in shaping team cohesion. Research suggests that coaches who employ training and instructional behaviors, provide social support, offer positive feedback, and adopt a democratic leadership style can significantly enhance team cohesion (Kim & Cruz, 2016). Conversely, an autocratic leadership style, characterized by excessive control and limited athlete involvement, may negatively impact cohesion levels. Research indicates that effective coaching methods contribute to a positive team atmosphere (Becker, 2009), enhanced performance (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004), and successful athletic careers (Beauchamp et al., 2008)

The Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) serves as the theoretical framework for this study, providing a comprehensive approach to understanding leadership effectiveness

in sports contexts. This model posits that leadership effectiveness is a dynamic interplay between various factors, including leader characteristics, athlete attributes, and situational variables. Specifically, the model suggests that effective leadership emerges from the harmonious interaction of leader traits, such as interpersonal skills, experience, and decision-making abilities, with athlete characteristics, including age, gender, skill level, experience, and motivation, within the specific context of a sport, such as group size, type of sport, and the importance of the competition or game. Considering these interconnected elements, the Multidimensional Model offers a nuanced understanding of the complex factors influencing leadership success in sports settings.

While extensive research has demonstrated the significant influence of coach leadership style on team cohesion in various sports settings, inconsistencies persist in literature, particularly when examining elite football players. For instance, of most studies supporting the positive relationship between democratic leadership and team cohesion have been



conducted in player contexts, such as high school, junior elite, and university levels (Kim & Cruz, 2016). Conversely, theoretical perspectives suggest that senior male players striving for high performance and excellence may exhibit a preference for a more demanding and authoritative approach, often associated with autocratic leadership styles (Chelladurai, 2013; Weinberg & Gould, 2015).

Previous research on the relationship between autocratic leadership and team cohesion in professional sports has yielded mixed results. Studies conducted with Iranian and Turkish players (Mohades et al., 2011; Toros, 2010) found positive correlations between autocratic leadership and social cohesion, particularly pre-tournament. However, these findings were not consistent across all studies. For example, research with Japanese university athletes (Chelladurai et al., 1988) revealed a preference for autocratic leadership combined with social support. In contrast, studies examining elite Iranian and Ethiopian athletes (Sarpira et al., 2012; Alemu & Babu, 2012) did not find significant correlations between autocratic leadership and team cohesion dimensions.

Moreover, Crăciun and Rus (2009) reported negative correlations between overall coach's leadership style and team cohesion in Romanian athletes, although the competitive level of these athletes was not specified.

2. Problem statement

Team cohesion, the psychological bond that unites members of a team, is a critical factor in athletic performance (Oh, & Yoo, 2023). In professional sports leagues like the Amhara National Football League (ANFL), effective leadership is often seen as a key driver of team cohesion. Previous research investigated the relationship between coach leadership styles and team cohesion in a group of English youth soccer players (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004), in a Brazilian futsal team (Nascimento & Vieira 2013), Australian youth athletes (Callow et al., 2009). Ethiopians university students (Tesfay, 2015) and Iranian students (Mohsen, Reza, Mehrdad, Ali, and Mir, 2012)

It is important to note that the majority of studies examining the coach's influence on team cohesion have been conducted in non-professional settings. This suggests that the



findings may not be fully generalizable to high-performance athletic teams. Moreover, the connection between coach leadership style and team cohesion remains understudied, especially in the context of professional football players. Additionally, social factors may influence these dynamics. To address this knowledge gap, our study investigated the impact of coaches' leadership styles on team cohesion among teams in ANFL.

Therefore, further research is needed to explore how coaches' behaviors and leadership styles can be tailored to foster both task and social cohesion in various athletic contexts. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by investigating how different leadership styles and behaviors are perceived by team members and how these perceptions influence the level of team cohesion. Drawing from existing literature, we hypothesized that leadership styles characterized by democratic behavior, social support, reinforcement, training, and instruction would positively influence both social and task cohesion. Conversely, we anticipated that autocratic leadership would not significantly affect team cohesion.

3. Materials and Methods

Research design

This study employed a correlational design to investigate the relationship between coach leadership style (independent variables) and team cohesion (dependent variable). The study adhered to ethical guidelines established by the Bahir Dar University's Sports Academy Research Ethics Review Committee and the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants provided informed consent, and data were treated anonymously.

Participants

A total of 275 male football players from 11 teams in the Amhara National Football League (ANFL) participated in this study. These teams included Amba Georgis, Amhara Police, Awi Empltak, Dambate Kenema, Damote Kenema, Debark Kenema, Debreberhan Kenema, Debremarkos Kenema, Lasta Lalibela, Mersa Kenema, and Yeyeju Fere Weldeya. All teams and players are included in the study. Each team contributed 25 players.

Most of the athletes were young adults, with 52.8% falling within the 26-30 age range. A significant proportion (36%) was



aged 20-25, while 11.2% were 30-35 years old. In terms of training experience, a substantial number of athletes (70%) had more than 10 years of training, indicating a high level of experience and dedication. The remaining 30% had 10 years or less of training experience. Regarding educational

attainment, the majority of athletes (65%) had completed secondary education. A significant proportion (26%) had completed higher education, while a smaller group (9%) had completed primary education (See table 1)

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of football players in eleven teams (N = 275)

Characteristic	Category	Counts	Percentage
Age	20-25	99	36
	26-30	145	52.8
	30-35	31	11.2
Training Age	>7 years	193	70
	≤7 years	82	30
Education Level	Diploma/Degree	71	26
	Secondary	179	65
	Primary	25	9
Total		275	100

Data Collection instruments

To evaluate coach leadership behaviors and team cohesion adapted Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) and the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ; Carron, Widmeyer, Brawley, 2002) were used. The national instrument, LSS, is constituted by 40 items in a 5-point-Likert-type scale (1-

never to 5-always). The other instrument, GEQ, comprises 18 items, in a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree.". The data were collected face to-face around stadium. During data collection, all participants were informed about the benefits and drawbacks of participating in the study.

Table 2: Summary Results of Reliability and Factorial Analyses

Coaches Leadership variable	Number of items	α
Training and Instruction(TAI)	20	0.96
Social Support (SS)	6	0.79
Democratic Behavior (DB)	4	0.76
Positive Feedback (PF)	5	0.84
Autocratic Behavior (AB)	5	0.75
Total :		40 0.82
Team cohesion variables		

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Group Integration (Social)	4	0.79
Individual attraction to Group (Social)	5	0.75
Individual Attraction to Group (Task)	5	0.79
Group Integration (Task)	4	0.80
Total :	20	0.78

The researchers gathered input from language experts and instructors, statisticians, football professionals, and players. The pilot tests were then conducted with a separate group of 105 participants to confirm the clarity and reliability of the questionnaires. All subscales, including those related to leadership styles (Training and Instruction, Social Support, Democratic Behavior, Positive Feedback, Autocratic Behavior) and team cohesion (Group Integration, Individual attraction to Group, Individual attraction to Group, and Group Integration) met the established reliability standards ($\alpha \geq .75$), ensuring the validity of subsequent data analysis.

Data Analysis

To ensure the quality and accuracy of our data, we national checked to see if it was reliable and followed a normal pattern. We used two statistical tests: the Cronbach alpha and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The Cronbach alpha showed that our data was reliable (with a score greater than 0.806) and consistent and trustworthy. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirmed that our data followed a normal

distribution (with a p-value greater than 0.05), which is important for many statistical analyses.

Next, we analyzed our data in several ways. We looked at the frequency of different responses, the percentage of people who chose each option, the relationships between different variables (using correlation analysis), and how one variable predicted another (using regression analysis). To understand the strength of these relationships, we used a scale: 0.1-0.3 was considered small, 0.3-0.5 moderate, 0.5-0.7 large, 0.7-0.9 extremely large, and 0.9-1.0 perfect (based on the work of Hopkins, Marshall, Batterham, and Hanin, 2009).

We used statistical software IBM SPSS (version 26) to perform all these analyses. We set the significance level to $p < 0.05$, which means that any findings with a p-value less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

Ethical Considerations

To maintain ethical standards, this study adhered to principles including informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and protection from harm. Participants provided voluntary consent



after comprehensively explaining the study's purpose, potential benefits, and risks. To safeguard anonymity, participants were not required to disclose their names.

To safeguard participant confidentiality, all data collected were used exclusively for research purposes and not be shared with third parties. Participants provided informed consent prior to participation, understanding the study's objectives, potential benefits, and risks. Data was anonymized to protect participant identity. Strict protocols were implemented to maintain data security throughout the research process

4. Results

4.1. Results of relationships between coach leadership behaviors and team cohesion

This section delves into the core findings of our study, examining the connection between coach leadership behaviors and team cohesion. We employed Pearson correlation analysis to assess the extent and direction of these relationships across the entire participant group. Table 3, presented below, summarizes the key results of this analysis.

Table 3 provides compelling evidence of the interconnectedness between coach leadership behaviors and team cohesion within Amara's national football league in Ethiopia. The significant correlations ($p < 0.01$) between

various leadership behaviors and team cohesion underscore coaches' critical role in shaping their teams' dynamics and performance.

One of the most striking findings is the strong positive correlation ($r = .482$) between Training and Instruction and Individual attraction to Group (Task). This suggests that coaches who prioritize effective training and instruction are more likely to foster a sense of individual commitment and dedication to the team's goals and tasks. By providing clear guidance, feedback, and opportunities for skill development, coaches can empower athletes to feel invested in the team's success.

In contrast, the strong negative correlation ($r = -.485$) between Autocratic Behavior and Individual Attraction to Group (Task) highlights the potential detrimental effects of an authoritarian leadership style. Coaches who exhibit autocratic behavior, such as making all decisions unilaterally and demanding strict obedience, may discourage athletes from feeling engaged and motivated. This can lead to decreased individual commitment and a less cohesive team environment.

Overall, the findings offer compelling evidence for the influence of leadership style on team dynamics. By investing in the development of effective leadership behaviors, coaches can significantly improve team cohesion and create a positive and productive environment for



athletes. This can lead to enhanced performance, increased player satisfaction, and a more enjoyable experience for all involved.

Table 3: Summary Pearson correlation between coach leadership behaviors and team cohesion variables (n= 275)

Variables	TAI	SS	DB	PF	AB
Group Integration (Social)	0.059	0.118	0.034	0.329**	-0.191*
Individual Attraction to Group (Social)	0.138	0.113	-0.119	0.052	-0.365**
Individual Attraction to Group (Task)	0.482**	-0.036	0.182*	0.173*	-0.485**
Group Integration (Task)	0.283**	0.095	0.161	0.347**	0.060

*Note: Note: Training and Instruction= TAI, Social, Support= SS, Democratic Behavior=DB Positive Feedback= PF, and Autocratic Behavior=AB, * p < 0.05, and **p < 0.01(2-tailed).*

4.2. Regression models and summary results of analyses

In this study, the authors used linear regression and both the leadership and the cohesion variables entered the model to predict the dependent variable, team cohesion, in the

model. Table 4 presents the summary of the regression analysis for the five leadership independent variables.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Models Predicting the team cohesion for the Total Sample (n = 275).

DV	IV	USC	SE	t-value	Sig.	SC	F value	R ²
Group Integration (Social)	TAI	.063	.077	.820	.414	.063	5.580	0.591
	SS	.121	.076	1.579	.117	.121		
	DB	.002	.077	.021	.984	.002		
	PF	.331	.077	4.321	.001**	.331		
	AB	-.190	.076	-2.499	.014*	-.191		
Group Individual attraction to Group (Social)	TAI	.140	.076	1.852	.066	.140	6.380	0.623
	SS	.114	.076	1.514	.132	.114		
	DB	-.120	.076	-1.579	.117	-.119		
	PF	.053	.076	.705	.482	.053		
	AB	-.354	.075	-4.825	.001**	-.365		
Individual Attraction to Group (Task)	TAI	.484	.070	6.913	.001**	.482	12.504	0.7010
	SS	-.032	.070	-.452	.652	-.032		
	DB	.181	.070	2.585	.011*	.180		
	PF	.177	.070	2.535	.012*	.177		
	AB	-.085	.070	-1.219	.225	-.085		
Group Integration (Task)	TAI	.285	.073	3.910	.001**	.285	9.077	0.641
	SS	.099	.073	1.358	.177	.099		
	DB	.161	.073	2.207	.029*	.161		
	PF	.350	.073	4.811	.001**	.351		
	AB	.059	.072	.815	.417	.059		



Note: Dependent Variable= DV, Independent Variable=IV, Unstandardized Coefficient= USC, Standardized Coefficient= SC, Standard Error= SE, Training and Instruction= TAI, Social Support= SS, Democratic Behavior=DB, Positive Feedback= PF, and Autocratic Behavior=AB, * $p < 0.05$, and, ** $p < 0.001$ (2-tailed)

The regression analysis reveals that leadership variables significantly predict team cohesion, particularly individual attraction to group tasks ($R^2 = .70$, $p = .05$) and group integration tasks ($R^2 = .64$, $p = .05$). These findings suggest that leadership behaviors and interactions can substantially influence how team members collaborate and feel connected to their group task.

Overall, these findings suggest that effective leadership can foster task-related cohesion social cohesion within a team. Leaders can play a significant role in creating a positive and supportive social environment where team members feel connected to each other and enjoy working together.

Among the individual predictors, Training and Instruction emerges as the strongest influence, with a moderate standardized coefficient of .482. This indicates that a one-unit increase in Training and Instruction (e.g., better-instructing skills, clearer explanations) is associated with an average increase of 0.48 units in Individual attraction to Group Tasks. Interestingly, even holding democratic behavior and positive feedback constant, an improvement in Training and Instruction is linked to a significant boost in Individual attraction to group task.

Overall, these findings highlight the critical role of leadership styles, particularly Training and

The regression analysis also discloses that group individual attraction to group Social ($R^2 = .62$, $p = .05$) and group integration social ($R^2 = .59$, $p = .05$). The way leaders behave and interact with their team members can influence how well the team members interact with each other on a social level and feel connected socially.

Instruction, in fostering player's Individual attraction to group task and group integration task. Investing in enhancing coach's instruction and teaching skills has the potential to significantly impact player's attraction integration in football training.

As shown in Table 3, leadership variables highly predicted the dependent variable, group integration Social cohesion (59% explained variance). Autocratic Behavior (-.35) and Positive Feedback (.35) were found to be the better predictor of players' group Individual attraction to Group Social and group Integration Task cohesion using the beta scores for the predictors, respectively. It was discovered that the coach's instruction and teaching were a better predictor of player cohesion in football teams (.48).

5. Discussion

This study investigated how leadership variables affect team cohesion at the national football league in Amhara, Ethiopia. Although earlier studies on



team cohesion in football games, particularly the relationship in the context of Ethiopian professional football players remains understudied. To address this knowledge gap, our study investigated the impact of coaches' leadership styles on team cohesion among teams in ANFL.

This study investigated the relationship between coaches' leadership styles and team cohesion in the Amhara National Football League. Correlation and regression analyses revealed significant positive associations between various leadership styles and teams' task and social cohesion. According to the correlational results, individual attraction to group task cohesion has a strong and positive correlation with training and instruction variables ($r = .482, p < .001$). Additionally, it has a strong but negative association with the autocratic behavior of coaches ($r = -.485, p < .001$).

The implication is that coaches who emphasize training and instruction are more likely to foster a positive group dynamic where individuals feel attracted to the group's tasks. This aligns with previous research that has linked transformational leadership (which often includes training and instruction) to positive team cohesion outcomes (Callow et al., 2009; Carron & Eys, 2012). It also means that coaches who exhibit autocratic behaviors may negatively impact individual attraction to group tasks. This finding is consistent with previous research that has linked autocratic leadership to lower team cohesion and motivation

(Chelladurai, 2007; Weinberg & Gould, 2015; Hyun-Duck, & Angelita, 2016).

Overall, these findings suggest that effective leadership, characterized by a focus on training and instruction and an avoidance of autocratic behaviors, can play a crucial role in fostering positive team dynamics and enhancing individual engagement in group tasks.

The regression results indicate that leadership variables significantly predict team cohesion variables, with R^2 values ranging from 59% to 70%. This means that leadership behaviors and interactions can explain a substantial portion of the variance in team cohesion. Specifically, the finding is that leadership variables explain 70% of the variance in Individual attraction to Group Task cohesion, implying that Leadership is a major factor in influencing how individuals feel connected to and committed to the group's tasks. 70% of the differences in how team members feel attracted to the group's tasks can be attributed to the way leaders behave and interact with them. This suggests that effective leadership can significantly impact the level of individual commitment and engagement within a team. By understanding and implementing effective leadership strategies, organizations can foster a positive and productive work environment where team members are motivated to contribute to the group's goals. It was consistent with the findings of previous researches (Nascimento-Júnior et al., 2018; Leo et al., 2013; Carron & Eys, 2012; López et al., 2012; Chelladurai, 2007). Furthermore,



coaches are instrumental in fostering team social cohesion (Caperchione et al., 2011; Leo et al., 2009).

The present study identified training and instruction as the primary predictor of team cohesion variables in the Amhara National Football League teams. However, this finding contradicts previous research linking autocratic leadership to team cohesion (Chelladurai, 2007, 2013; Weinberg & Gould, 2015). This inconsistency may be attributed to team level, capability, and cultural context. While autocratic leadership has shown positive effects in certain settings (Mohades et al., 2011; Toros, 2010; Chelladurai et al., 1988), cultural nuances can influence athletes' preferences for leadership styles (Duarte et al., 2017). This suggests that the interplay between player-preferred leadership and perceived coach behavior may impact both sport satisfaction and team cohesion.

The findings of this study have several significant implications for understanding the relationship between leadership style and team cohesion in football. Firstly, the study underscores the importance of coaches providing effective training and instruction. These behaviors are strongly associated with increased individual attraction to group tasks and overall team cohesion. Coaches prioritizing skill development and knowledge transfer create a positive environment where players feel valued, supported, and motivated to contribute to the team's success. Secondly, the research also emphasizes the negative impact of

autocratic leadership on team cohesion. Coaches who exhibit authoritarian behaviors may hinder individual engagement and create a negative team atmosphere. Autocratic leaders can diminish team morale and performance by fostering a sense of control and limiting player autonomy. Thirdly, the study's findings suggest that cultural nuances can influence athletes' preferences for leadership styles. While autocratic leadership may be effective in certain contexts, the Ethiopian cultural context may require a more participatory and supportive approach. Understanding these cultural differences is crucial for coaches to adapt their leadership styles to the specific needs of their players. Fourthly, the study's regression analysis reveals that leadership variables explain a substantial portion of the variance in team cohesion. This suggests that coaches' behaviors and interactions profoundly impact how players perceive and experience their team. By implementing effective leadership strategies, organizations can significantly enhance team performance and create a positive work environment. Last but not least, the implication is that, The findings of this study offer valuable guidance for coaching development programs. Coaches can benefit from training and education focusing on developing effective leadership skills, including training and instruction techniques, and avoiding autocratic behaviors. Organizations can improve player satisfaction, engagement, and overall performance by equipping coaches with the tools to create a positive and supportive team environment.



The findings of this study have significant effects for understanding the relationship between leadership style and team cohesion in football. Given the importance of player cohesion and coach leadership style for football federations, future interventions aimed at influencing team cohesion through coach leadership behavior are necessary. While this study involved 275 players from a specific league in the Amhara region, generalizing and confirming the results requires similar studies across broader cultural contexts, individual characteristics, and leadership (including perceptions and multidimensionality) influence both social and task cohesion across a season (Duarte et al., 2017; Toros, 2010). Additionally, exploring these dynamics in other Ethiopian team sports, particularly those with athletes playing in foreign leagues, could reveal broader implications. Furthermore, team cohesion is not an end in itself. Investigating team cohesion from the coaches' perspective is essential to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this critical aspect of football performance.

6. Conclusions

Given the significant role of coaches' leadership behavior in influencing player cohesion in football, understanding how coaches' leadership styles, as perceived by players, predict team cohesion for both task and social aspects is crucial for developing targeted interventions to enhance team cohesion and improve coaching practices. This study investigates the relationship between coaches'

leadership behavior and team cohesion, considering both task and social dimensions.

The results of this study demonstrate a strong, direct association between football team cohesion and most leadership variables. Regression analyses confirmed that coach leadership behaviors significantly predict team cohesion, accounting for up to 70% of the variance. For example, a one-unit increase in training and instruction is associated with an average increase of 0.48 units in individual attraction to group task cohesion.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The protocol was approved by the Review Committee of , Bahir Dar University.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study before data collection.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.



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