

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this dissertation was to examine the relationship between team success and team cohesiveness with a sample of elite youth sport teams. The secondary aim of this international thesis was to translate and analyze the psychometric properties of responses to the Czech and Slovak versions of the Youth Sport Environment Questionnaire (YSEQ; Eys, Loughhead, Bray, & Carron, 2009b) in a sample of elite youth handball and soccer players.

The accomplishment of the second purpose involved three phases of research. First, the questionnaire was translated into the Czech and Slovak languages by method of parallel back-translation. In Phase 2, feedback was sought on the translated versions of each questionnaire from both researchers ($N = 2$) and athletes ($N = 52$) to ensure the clarity of the instructions and the readability of the items. Subsequent confirmatory analyses in the final phase provided an adequate fitting model for both Czech and Slovak versions with an independent sample ($N = 352$) from youth sport teams. These results offer further support to Eys et al.'s (2009b) proposed two dimensional model underlying their measure of cohesion for youth sport groups.

In terms of the general purpose, we employed structural equation modeling to examine the direction of that relationship via a cross-lagged design. The sample consisted of elite youth handball and soccer players ($N = 337$) from the Czech and Slovak Republics. We assessed team cohesion and performance at the midpoint and near the end of a single competitive season, a time which spanned approximately fourth months. Results indicated that team success at the midpoint of the season significantly predicted increases in perceptions of team cohesion later in the season, whereas perceptions of team cohesion did not significantly predict success later in the season. Within some limits regarding the design and sample, it appears that the performance-to-cohesion relationship is stronger than the cohesion-to-performance relationship in elite youth sport teams. Theoretical and applied implications are discussed.

Moreover, we gained an insight about the nature of the relationship between cohesion and performance in elite youth sport teams through the experiences of coaches who have led elite youth athletes. More specially, we gained an understanding of why is the performance-to-cohesion relationship was stronger than the cohesion-to-performance relationship with the sample of elite youth handball and soccer players. Semistructured interviews with 17 male

and 2 female Czech and Slovak coaches from two team sports: soccer and handball. Clear trends regarding the cohesion-performance relationship emerged. Overall, coaches indicated (a) group cohesion in sport (b) group cohesion and sport performance in elite youth teams (c) determinates that influence the level of group cohesion. Practical and theoretical implications pertaining to the cohesion-performance relationship are discussed.

Keywords: group cohesion, team success, youth, longitudinal study, translation, confirmatory factor analysis, elite team sports