

Coaching: Democracy or Dictatorship? Using the social learning theory analyse how a coach's behaviour can influence team cohesion

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Abstract:

This study investigates how different coaching styles influence team cohesion in competitive esports and traditional sports teams. Using a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach, I conducted questionnaires with 30 players and coaches across various leagues and sports. Quantitative analysis revealed that democratic coaching significantly boosts team cohesion, while authoritarian styles can often reduce it. Qualitative responses supported these findings, highlighting the importance of modelling positive communication behaviours and trust as well as the effects that conflict can have. These results suggest that coaching style plays a critical role in team cohesion and offer practical recommendations for esports coaches seeking to foster stronger, more unified teams.

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Introduction:

Esports involve the competitive and organised play of specific video games (e.g., League of Legends) (Pedraza-Ramirez, Musculus, Raab, & Laborde, 2020) and has roots in entertainment, media, and sports (Scholz 2020). Since its inception in the early 1990s, esports has grown from small-scale arcade competitions to global events featuring branded commercial teams competing in formalised, region-based leagues (Watson 2022). In this study we aim to explore how important a coach's role can be in an esports team in comparison to a traditional sports team, similarities can be seen through the imperative to achieve results against rivals within a time-bound competition (Scholz, 2020) and the psychological demands on players connected to this (Himmelstein, Liu, & Shapiro, 2017). Similarly to athletes, esports players require training, concentration, and teamwork along with commitment to a season. This involves weeks of continuous preparation and performances; this must be overseen by a team coach whose ideas guide the team. Due to its growth esports research is being collected and published in sport journals such as the International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology (Pedraza-Ramirez et al. 2020), BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine (Pereira, Brito, Figueiredo, & Verhagen, 2019), and International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching (Novak, Bennett, Pluss, & Fransen, 2020). Furthermore, sporting bodies and organisations are recognising the potential in the digital industry for a new form of popular entertainment and are creating their own teams so that they don't miss out; PSG and Wolverhampton Wanderers being examples in football. There have even been international competitions for just esports such as the Asian Games 2022 as well as parallel championships (Commonwealth games 2022) hence revealing that esports are increasingly recognised as an area relevant to sporting bodies, and sport researchers (Watson 2022).

Although it is necessary for successful teams in esports, research on coaching has been very sparse and sporadic. This gap hinders our ability to understand effective coaching practices that are specific to the challenges of esports, further limiting any opportunities for targeted interventions. One gap in the literature can be seen through the social learning theory, introduced by Albert Bandura (1977) which provides a compelling lens through which to explore the impact of coaching behaviour on team cohesion. This theory explores how individuals learn and internalise behaviours based on their role model such as a coach in a leadership position. Leadership

behaviour plays a key role in employee job crafting. The leaders set goals, allocate resources, establish rules, and guide the work atmosphere (Rickley and Stackhouse, 2022, Arici and Uysal, 2022). It is the players job to listen and implement the coach's/leaders' ideas when they play.

The significance of this research lies in addressing a critical gap in understanding the role of coaching in esports, a rapidly growing industry that blends elements of traditional sports, digital media, and entertainment. While coaching in traditional sports has been extensively studied, the unique demands of esports—such as its digital environment, fast-paced competition, and reliance on team cohesion—remain underexplored. This study aims to provide insights into effective coaching styles that can enhance team cohesion in esports. By applying established theories such as Social Learning Theory and Path-Goal Theory to this context, the research not only expands the theoretical understanding of leadership in digital domains but also offers practical recommendations for esports organisations. Furthermore, the findings could contribute to legitimising esports as a professional discipline, supporting the development of structured coaching approaches that promote player well-being, motivation, and long-term success.

Aims and Objectives:

- An aim for this study is to analyse how influential a coach's style of coaching can be on the cohesion of a team.
- Use the social learning theory to understand how the coach's actions are replicated through their players
- To see if an authoritative coaching style is more prevalent than a democratic one.

Literature review:

At the heart of effective coaching lies the challenge of adopting a style that maximises team cohesion, an essential factor for success in any group setting. House (1971) presents the function of the leader as enhancing the performance of subordinates in a goal-directed activity. In esports where team success is often a by-product of quick-thinking and team chemistry, House's framework underscores the coach's role in aligning individual contributions with collective objectives.

Furthermore, it is important to note the differences between team process and emergent states as they are often confused. Team processes comprise observable behaviours within a team, while emergent states involve cognitive, attitudinal, motivational, and affective states that develop over time as a result of individuals' previous experiences with their team (Crawford 2024), for example teamwork compromises as a set of behavioural processes, Marks defines these processes as

“interactions that take place among team members during the course of goal accomplishment” (Marks et al 2001). This is commonly mistaken for team cohesion, which dictates the attractiveness of the group – how attractive the group is to them (Eys & Evans 2018) and the group integration system, which Eys & Evans further describe as “the extent of closeness and cooperation within the group as a whole”. It is essential to understand the differences between team processes and emergent states, Marks et al (2001) notes that “this distinction is important, because indices of emergent states are often intermingled with interactional process indicators (e.g., coordination), which results in serious construct contamination. Emergent states do not represent team interaction or team actions that lead toward outcomes” (p. 358). However, there is research that shows that there might be some indirect correlation and influence between the two for example; effective communication between team members can result in a surge in team cohesion, which can enhance subsequent team communication; (Marks et al., 2001).

Together, these factors translate social inputs into potential outcomes for the team, defining to what extent a team can reach its desired goals. To date most research around teamwork has focused on conceptualization and relationships with emergent states and outcomes (e.g., McEwan, 2020). The focus of this study is to explore how exterior inputs (outside of the immediate team players) can impact team cohesion, looking at the role of a coach in a traditional sports setting before comparing it to esports teams and analysing if the effectiveness is still potent in a digital world.

Research outside of sport has also offered descriptions of various leadership behaviours that may foster team effectiveness, such as providing motivational support, helping teams strategize, and teaching team members relevant skills (Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Peters & Carr, 2013.) Evident through Zaccaro et al (2001) work on organisational psychology, Zaccaro states that “effective leadership processes represent perhaps the most critical factor in the success of organisational teams”. In relation to the sporting world, the behaviour of the coach has been seen to promote certain factors within the team; coach-athlete relationships (Jowett, 2017), group cohesion (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004) and athlete motivation (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The importance of a coach in a team stems from the players acceptance of the coach's leadership identity in the team, with some early work emphasising how the lack of respect to the authority of the leadership role leads to breakdowns in terms of team cohesion and execution in a game setting (McEwan & Crawford, 2022).

When it comes to research in esports there is a clear gap between coaching methods. One key gap is the lack of formalised, standardised training for esports coaches. Unlike traditional sports, where there are established pathways for coaching certification, mentorship, and ongoing professional development, esports coaching is still largely shaped by individual experience and personal success as a player (Bubna, Trotter and Watson 2024). This creates variability in the quality and effectiveness of coaches due to the lack of experiences they may have taken part in. Furthermore, traditional sports coaches are trained to manage both the physical and mental aspects of players, with a well-established support network of sports psychologists, fitness

experts, and tactical advisors. In contrast, esports coaching often lacks a multidisciplinary approach, with coaches needing to juggle multiple roles, from strategy development to managing mental health and maintaining team morale (Chittenden and Niven 2020, Faiola and Pappas 2017). Coaches play a significant role in developing an athlete's psychological skills, including techniques for controlling anxiety and enhancing mental toughness (Gould and Dieffenbach 2002). The emphasis on in-game performance and the rapid pace of change in esports also makes it difficult for coaches to keep up with evolving game mechanics, forcing many to rely on trial-and-error rather than formalized, research-based strategies. Therefore, while the esports industry is growing rapidly, it still falls short in creating a comprehensive coaching infrastructure that addresses both the psychological and tactical needs of players, a gap that could hinder long-term player and team development.

Differences in Coaching Styles

Research on coaching styles has been studied in traditional sports over the last century in moderate depth, Neil and Kirby conducted a study on preferred coaching and leadership styles (1985) focusing on rowers and paddlers. They found it was possible to divide leadership behaviours in sport into relatively distinct styles. Tutko, Ogilvie and Lyon (Tutko and Richards 1971) examined athletes at various stages of participation (casual to professional) and the demands made upon them by the sport. They suggested a coaching style classification based on general coaching behaviours, which highlighted the differences between the coaches' coaching styles and how they handle their players. Tutko, Ogilvie and Lyon (Tutko and Richards 1971) named the styles (1) Authoritarian, (2) Nice Guy, (3) Intense or Driven, (4) Easy-going and (5) Business-like. Lenk (1977) believed there were only 3 styles of coaching, as did McMurray (1958), based on the coach's decision-making procedure and called them (1) authoritarian, (2) Democratic and (3) laissez-faire. Chelladural and Saleh (1980) factor analysed preferred leadership behaviours among physical education majors and identified 5 leadership styles (1) training, (2) autocratic, (3) democratic, (4) social support and (5) Rewarding. These ideas present the problem that is inherent with understanding coaching styles, as shown in the work above which attempts to place predominant but extremely complicated and somewhat inconsistent behaviours into some meaningful and measurable form (Neil and Kirby 1985).

The following styles appear to emerge as the most dominant and consistent coaching styles from the work of earlier writers and researchers on leadership in traditional sport. They are based on the behaviour characteristics and decision-making practices of group leaders like coaches. As styles, they are not restricted to these bounds and movement is expected between distinctive styles depending on the situations that may arise. The types identified by Neil and Kirby (1985) are: (1) Authoritarian, (2) Democratic and (3) Laissez-faire/nice guy. Their identifying characteristics can be seen in through the table L.01 in the appendix.

Player-Centered Coaching Approaches and Their Suitability for Esports

Earlier on we discussed coaching approaches focused on research on traditional sports, but how suitable will these approaches be when implemented into esports. Coaches who adopt an athlete-centered approach prioritize the individual needs, goals, and long-term development of players building a positive environment within the team, fostering an intense sense of team cohesiveness. This coaching style encourages open communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making, enabling players to take ownership of their development (Jenny, 2017), meaning they are not restricted to an authoritarian figure telling them how to act. This method emphasizes building strong relationships, understanding players' strengths and weaknesses, offering personalized feedback, promoting continuous learning and optimal performance (Halvorson, 2020). Furthermore, creating a friendly environment where the players can relax without being stressed about conforming to stereotypical expectations that can harm team cohesiveness.

What is An Esports Coach

The Role of an esports coach is unique compared to that of a traditional coach. Although contrary to popular belief not every coach was an ex-player, however due to their prior knowledge of the game it is common. It is key then to consider why this stereotype is so prevalent in the industry. Watson et al (2024) believes that in the absence of research and agreed standards, it is plausible that playing experience represents an easy, tangible, and quantifiable metric by which to understand and compare coaches. This is due to coaches in the past not needing to hold any sports or esports qualifications, unlike in traditional sports environments. Esports coaches have self-organised their careers, relying on word of mouth and social capital to access coaching positions, while drawing from a wide range of sources to inform and improve their coaching practice (Watson et al., 2022). Whether they are ex pro's or not, all coaches have demonstrated a drive to succeed and push their teams towards greatness, yet does their coaching styles differ based on their past experiences of being a professional in that field or do the best coaches just get lucky?

It can be difficult to define specifically what an esports coach does; this is due to the lack of research in the field and the complexity of the job. Furthermore, using the term "esports coach" to represent all coaches through all games is impractical due to the differences between the games and the roles that a coach needs to fulfil in relation to those differences. As in traditional sports, the esports coach's role will differ based on the game they are involved in, the competitive level they are working at, the age and stage of their players, their own attitudes and beliefs about coaching, and other factors (Watson et al, 2024). It is important to state that there is no one-size fits all when it comes to esports coaching. It is also important to note that depending on the game may change the number of coaches on the coaching team. Using the popular MOBA esports game "League of Legends" as an example we can see similarities to traditional sports coaching teams;

coaching staff consists of (1) Head Coach, (2) Assistant Coach, (3) Positional Coach and (4) Performance Coach. While the head coach, assistant coach, and positional coach are largely engaged with game-specific planning, strategizing, analysis, and feedback, a performance coach typically contributes expertise in mental skills, sport and exercise science, personal training, nutrition, group dynamics and/or communication (Watson et al., 2021). However, as with the coaches' careers the actuality of the coaches' roles is far less clear cut. Watson et al (2024) explains that Coaching is a complex, social endeavor, and all staff members likely contribute to, and form part of, the team culture and group dynamics.

Becoming a team Player

Martončík (2015) found that esports fulfil the need to belong, through team relationships and the need for power by giving leaders decision-making authority. Martončík's findings also correspond with motivations for participating in online community, this sense of belonging can form a strong bond between the players and the coach, consequently improving the cohesiveness between them. The use of an "In-Game-Leader" (IGL), is essential for creating healthy relationships throughout the team, the IGL is a crucial point of contact through which the players can trust. The IGL also plays the role of the "middleman" between the players and coaches allowing the players to have their own space and freedom away from the authority of their coach. Research from Carron and Hasuenblas (2006) explains that "Teams often strengthen their cohesion and develop a deeper sense of trust and camaraderie when they are away from direct supervision, as they are required to rely on each other for support, communication, and decision-making." This builds cohesion which can be replicated in other aspects of life such as in the middle of an esports game. It is the coach's role to accept this and encourage this behaviour through understanding that they are just an additional tool to help hone the players performance.

Team Cohesion in Task and Social Dimensions – Esports and Traditional Sports

While the variability of group composition is often a prominent feature of esports teams, how efficiently the resources of a team can be utilised also depends on the compatibility of members, since each member's performance is influenced by how well he/she can work with others in the group (Carron 2012). Esports players operate in a highly competitive environment, separating them from most gamers who play casually for fun. This means that the objective of winning the game is a core component to how the team trains and sets their goals, which puts the players in a tough position where to win they must be able to collaborate under pressure. It is the coach's role to understand how to best help their players deal with this pressure. Individuals are more likely to follow those who display confidence, decisiveness, and strength, as these qualities signal competence and the ability to guide others through challenges (Lord and Brown 2004).

Studies have identified correlation between enhanced team cohesion and better team performance in a variety of contexts (e.g., Chiu, Owens, & Tesluk, 2016; Dingsøyr, Fægri, Dybå,

Haugset, & Lindsjörn, 2016; Falcão, Bloom, & Loughead, 2015; Salas et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2015). In sports, specifically, the mutual influence between team cohesion and performance has been identified and analysed on individual as well as group levels (Carron 2012). Considering the resemblances esports bears to traditional sports in terms of team synergy and dynamics, it is reasonable to apply at least some of the findings in traditional sports to the players fighting side by side in the virtual world.

Coach's behaviour and its effects on player relationships

The relationships between coach and the players are also critical to a cohesive team environment, for this to happen Short et al., (2005) identified several key roles a coach must fill. Primarily, the coach is a teacher, where "Quality training or practising provide opportunities for coaches to display their knowledge and skills to help prepare athletes for competition," this allows them to demonstrate their ability to the players building their trust in their coach's idea's and elevates the coach as the leader in the relationship. Furthermore, Short et al., described that the coach also fills the role of; organiser, competitor, learner, and friend/mentor, Short et al's, work presents the perspective that the coach covers multiple roles in their players development, with the underlying belief that each role strengthens the coach-athlete relationship. Consequently, their findings revealed that coach-athlete relationships vary depending on the sport, "athletes in individual sports often feel closer and more committed to their coaches than do team players." (Short et al., 2005), This suggests that frequent and direct interactions between coach and athlete may positively impact the development of their relationship. In essence, the behaviours and roles adopted by a coach directly shape how players relate to one another, form connections, and work together toward shared goals.

Based on theoretical and empirical research previously studied, Cote et al (1999) developed the Coach Behavior Scale for Sport. This was due to the absence of a measurement tool that considered coach behaviours as these manifested across the breadth of sport types (individual and team) and performance levels (grassroots and elite), Côté et al (1999) developed and validated the CBS-S. This measures a much broader range of the most frequently and influential coach behaviours found in diverse sports and performance levels that are both positive and negative. The CBS-S measures a coach's behaviours to influence their athletes in areas such as; mental preparation, goal setting, and competition strategies. It also measures a coach's behaviours to build rapport (positive versus negative) with each athlete in the team or squad (Jowett 2017). The CBS-S has been used in research to examine associations between coaches' behaviours and athletes' outcomes (Mallet and Cote 2006). For example, it was found that perceived coach behaviours reflective of negative personal rapport and specific competition strategies were associated with student-athlete competition anxiety. In another study, researchers found that while increased positive and decreased negative coach behaviours were associated with athletes' satisfaction, this association was more pronounced for team sport athletes than individual sport

athletes. These findings were consistent with Smith (2003) findings, where coaches' behaviours were associated with athletes' satisfaction and performance.

Methodology

This study will be a cross-sectional study conducted in a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach. The questionnaire will include mainly qualitative questions with a few quantitative (Likert) questions to explore ex-players' opinions and their experiences of being in a team. This study adopts an inductive approach, allowing patterns and themes to emerge from the participants' experiences without imposing pre-existing theoretical frameworks. A subjectivist epistemology which sees knowledge as socially constructed through local and personal experiences was embraced (Potrac, Jones, & Nelson, 2014), with the goal to see how coaches can use this knowledge to impact a team. The targeted audience for the questionnaires will have to fit a certain criterion; have a minimum of 1 year experience in a competitive team with a coach, be over 18+ years old or have a previous history as a coach. Purposive sampling is used to select individuals with direct experience of team-based sports and diverse coaching styles. The aim of the questionnaire's is to collect firsthand experiences from a wide range of backgrounds and understand the participants emotions linked to those experiences before relating it back to the social learning theory to understand how the coach/ leader in the team impacted the enjoyability and cohesion of the participant and their fellow teammates.

Thematic analysis will be used to interpret and analyse the data to find patterns of meaning "themes" in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006 Framework), Spss and Excel will be used to quickly sort and manage the data collected. This method is ideal due to its added interpretive benefit of going just beyond describing the data but finding a deeper meaning to it. Regarding ethical considerations, this study received ethical approval from the "University Research Ethics Committee" (as seen in Appendix A), participants provide informed consent before participating and can leave the study at any time without consequence. Confidentiality is maintained by anonymizing data, and ethical approval is obtained from the institutional review board. For validity, member checking is conducted by sharing findings with participants for feedback unless they have made it clear that they want no further information.

Limitations:

This method of research collection does have a few limitations; limited depth of response is a key factor to consider as the willingness and ability of the participant to elaborate on the questions is important leading to a lack of depth and richness in their responses. Furthermore, response bias can factor into the responses (Maxwell 2013), this is where the respondent may consciously or unconsciously provide socially desirable answers or respond in a way, they believe aligns with

what the researcher expects, this can lead to the data being misleading and affect its authenticity. Other potential limitations include a small sample size and the subjective nature of thematic analysis (Patton 2002). The quality of the responses can also be limited due to the lack of clarification; the respondent will not be probed by the research to develop their responses unlike in other data collection methods. The inconsistency of the quality of writing can cause problems when it comes to thematic sampling due to the different writing styles and comfort levels leading to difficulties comparing results and finding patterns (Flick 2014).

Further limitations with the Likert scale questions can be seen through the lack of depth, the close ended questions restrict participants from providing detailed answers (Allan and Seaman 2007). These questions may also lack context due to the quantitative nature; this limitation can lead to a loss of important contextual factors that may affect the interpretation of the data. Further leading to the possibility of misinterpretation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2017), the questions have been designed to be easy to understand but any misunderstanding can result in inaccurate data.

Justification:

Qualitative questionnaires are the best choice as the goal is to explore and understand participants' attitudes, beliefs, experiences, perceptions, or emotions. Their research aims to gain a deep, detailed understanding of a specific phenomenon; by using qualitative questionnaires it will allow the study to capture rich, contextual data that may not be possible with structured, quantitative methods (Creswell 2014). Also, the allowed flexibility that comes with the use of qualitative questionnaires means that responses can be more personal as the participants can use their own words and are not limited to pre-set responses (Maxwell 2013).

Quantitative questions can also be beneficial to this study; quantitative questionnaires provide standardised questions with predetermined response options, ensuring that all participants are answering the same questions in the same way (Denscombe 2017). This results in objective data that is easy to compare and analyse (Field 2013). This can lead to the data becoming replicable and thus more reliable, allowing for a similar questionnaire to be created and the responses compared.

Data Analysis

I will be using Excel to sort the participants qualitative responses into genres, I will then use the 6 stages of reflective thematic analyses, (Clarke & Braun, 2021). One major goal from the outset of the process was to approach each step of the analysis with a qualitative sensibility that was continually reflexive of the individual biases and experiences, such as their positionality as past competitive athletes and coaches (Clarke & Braun, 2021). Then I will look for key themes, patterns and contradictions between participant responses and group them appropriately. Next, coaches'

responses were separated from the players responses so that no cross-contamination could negatively skew the outcomes.

The results were analysed according to procedures from Lenk (1977) to sort the responses into 3 separate factors to match the 3 different coaching styles that Lenk identified (Authoritarian, Democratic and Laisses-Faire). Each of the coaches' responses were analysed and given a factor that resembled their responses the most.

Similarly common themes throughout the athlete's data were tracked and labelled allowing their responses to be grouped based on their experiences. A three-way analysis of variance was used to format where the independent variables were, coaching style, relationship with coach and effects of coach's behaviours on the players.

For the Likert scale questions I will be using the Likert scaling method with a custom scoring system (Likert, 1932), the questions were inputted into Spss, the respondents' answers were given a score from -2 to +2 (-2 relating to strongly disagreeing, -1 related to disagree, 0 to neither agree or disagree, +1 to agree and +2 to strongly agree), then the sum of their questions was totalled at the end to get a total score. Each independent variable that was being tested would get a different total score. The questions will be split into genres that are closely related to the variables, having a higher score would mean that the respondent more closely agrees with the questions.

The maximum possible score per question was +60 where each respondent would have had to strongly agree with the questions (as there is 30 participants), on the other had the minimum score possible would have been -60 where each respondent strongly disagreed with the question. I then created tables based on whether the respondent describes their coaches as authoritarian or democratic, so that I can compare results and better answer my research question.

Results:

Results are based on responses by 30 participants who participated in the study.

Please see Appendix for Tables on overall (R.01), democratic (R.02) and authoritarian (R.03) scores. The tables relate to the Likert scale questions asked in the questionnaire.

Impacts of a Coach:

- 5/6 coaches strongly believe that a coach can have an impact on players relationships within a team (the 6th agreed but not to the same extent).

- The players had mixed responses to whether a coach can impact their relationships, overall, the majority agreed that coaches can impact their relationships 36% (11/30) strongly agree, 36% (11/30) agree and 6.6% (2/30) neither agree nor disagree.
- All the coaches firmly believed that they foster an environment where athletes are encouraged to collaborate.
- Some players felt that their coaches didn't foster environments where they were encouraged to collaborate. Overall, the responses were positive but there were even scenarios within the same team where players disagreed on the question.

Results on Conflict:

- 53.3% of players stated that when a coach actively addresses conflict it strengthens team cohesion.
- 30% of players stated that the more a coach addresses team conflict the more it can increase the tensions.
- Each team/coach experiences problems in different time gaps, some stated that issues only arose a few times a year compared to others who had issues weekly.

Observing a Coaches Behaviour:

- Overall, 43.3% stated that they often watch the coach's behaviour.
- 43.3% stated that they occasionally watch their coaches' behaviour
- 13.3% stated that they never watch their coach's behaviour.
- 75% (6/8) players on Staffs futsal team stated that they rarely observed their coach's behaviour.
- 86.6% respondents stated that they felt that their coach sets a positive example of behaviour inside and outside of training, as much as they can, however there can be moments when they do not.
- 13.3% disagree saying their coach is not a good role model for behaviour.

Impacts of Coaches and senior players behaviour:

- 23.3% stated that they model their behaviour of their coach
- 16.6% stated that they model their behaviour more on their senior players.
- 20% stated that they don't model their behaviour off coaches
- 40% stated that they somewhat model their behaviour of both senior players and past coaches, they pick up the good parts.

Impacts of coaches and senior players behaviour on teammates:

- Newer players are more likely to base their behaviour off their peers.

- Most responses stated that most teammates model parts of their behaviour of their coach

Team Environment:

- 96.7% stated that they enjoyed the team environment, however there were a few responses that stated they didn't like the coach, or that the environment could get a little toxic.

Views on the Coaches Approach:

- 40% describe their coach's approach as a dictatorship, strict and controlling.
- 46.6% described their coach's approach as a democracy, open and equal

Improvements on coaching styles:

- Many responses stated that the coach needs to change their training programs to accommodate for newer players, as well as having a more open and welcoming demeanour.
- Another theme was the coach focusing on the best players in the team and not managing all the players in the squad equally.
- Others stated that their coach needs to be stricter and stand their ground more.
- Being too blunt and harsh.

Esports vs Traditional sports:

- There were no clear differences between the responses between esports coaches and players and those who played traditional sports.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and analyse the impacts of different coaching styles, through the use of the open-ended qualitative questionnaires. An aim was set to understand how the players react to their coach's behaviour. This approach to the case study allowed the researcher to explore the meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as group dynamics and leadership process (Yin, 2009). The findings revealed that coach-player dynamics are very complicated, and even small differences in players experiences can have a greater impact on the cohesion of the team, this directly corresponds to the findings of Neil and Kirby (1985) who stated that “there is an inherent flaw in understand the nature of coaching styles due to their complicated environments.”

Democratic Vs Authoritarian

An interesting observation from the data reinforces the overall question of this literature; Democracy vs Dictatorship? A near perfect split of respondents describing their coaches coaching style as either democratic (14) or authoritarian (12) emphasizes the fact that there is no recognised “better” way of coaching a team and that it is down to the coach's discretion.

The data does, however, show the impacts of the coach's style on the experiences of the players under them; through tables R.02 and R.03 comparisons can be made between the 2 coaching styles. When asked “*Do you think your coach fosters an environment where athletes are encouraged to collaborate and help each other improve?*”, results show that players in a democratic environment strongly agree with the statement scoring 71% (+20/+28) of the maximum possible score, on the other hand players in an authoritarian environment only slightly agreed scoring only 33.3% (+8/+24) of their maximum score. These results build on the work by Weinberg and Gould (2014) which show how being involved in a more open and friendly environment will encourage collaboration through the team, the lack of rules and hierarchy allows for more free-flowing relationships which focus more on team spirit and building cohesion rather than focusing on only winning at all costs. This can be further backed up through answers in this study by players in an authoritarian environment describing their environment as “toxic” and “controlling” where the coach micromanages what they can do removing their freedom of expression. Similarly, Weinberg and Gould stated that authoritarian leadership can reduce the level of trust and teamwork, creating an environment where athletes are more likely to feel disengaged or stressed.

Similarly, the differing responses by players in the two different environments follow a pattern with the scores from the democratic group of players being slightly higher on all 8 of the questions, with the democratic total score being +109/+224, 48.66% of the maximum score compared to the authoritarian score being +51/+192 which is 26.56%. The largest difference between scores can be seen through the question “*Does your coach feel approachable if you have any issues going on outside the team?*” with the democratic responses scoring +17/+28 (61% of the maximum score) compared to the authoritarian responses which scored +7/+24 (29% of the maximum score). This data aligns with the work of Magaeu and Vallerand (2003) whose studies show that athletes perform better and have higher levels of satisfaction when they feel part of a collaborative and supportive team environment. The democratic coaching style, where players are encouraged to collaborate, share ideas, and contribute to the team's success, enhances both individual and collective well-being.

However, while these results support the benefits of democratic coaching, it is essential to acknowledge that the higher scores in the democratic environment may not necessarily indicate a direct cause-and-effect relationship between coaching style and player satisfaction. There may be other factors at play, such as individual personalities, team dynamics, or even specific expectations set by the coaches in both environments. Additionally, the authoritarian group, although scoring lower, may still experience positive outcomes in other contexts or performance measures not captured in this study. Further research could explore these nuances and investigate whether certain contexts or team types (e.g., high-pressure or elite performance settings) could

lead to different results. Additionally, the subjective nature of player responses could introduce biases, particularly if players feel pressure to conform to social norms regarding what makes a "good" coach.

Replication of Behaviour

The data reveals a complex relationship between players and their coaches, highlighting the varying degrees to which players observe and model their coach's behaviour. While 43.3% of respondents responded that they frequently observed their coach's actions, suggesting that modelling and imitation—key components of Bandura's social learning theory—are at play, 36% of participants only observe their coach's behaviour to a limited extent, and 20% never do so. This variation suggests that factors such as coaching style or player engagement may influence how much attention players give to their coach. Interestingly, when asked whether they model their behaviour after their coach, 23.3% of players said they do, while 40% stated they model their behaviour based on both senior players and past coaches, indicating that players are drawing from a range of role models. The influence of peer learning is also evident, as 16.6% model their behaviour after senior players, reflecting the importance of peer dynamics within team sports. I'd recommend that future studies should also explore the role of older players and their impact on the cohesion of a team. As these findings demonstrate that while coaches are important role models, the influence of senior players and the blending of both sources of influence play a significant role in shaping player behaviour and development, underscoring the social nature of learning within team environments.

Conflict

According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), the way a coach interacts with players—whether through active conflict resolution or decision-making—affects how players perceive their roles in the team and contributes to team cohesion. When conflict arises, it can affect team unity in various ways. Analysis of participant responses revealed diverse perspectives on the impact of addressing team conflict. Among the 30 participants, 16 expressed that when a coach actively addresses conflict, it strengthens team cohesion and boosts morale, leading to a positive team dynamic. Conversely, 9 participants reported that conflict resolution efforts by the coach sometimes had a divisive effect, creating tension among players.

This variation in responses aligns with Tuckman's Model of Team Development (1965), which outlines the stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing. The storming phase—characterized by conflicts, power struggles, and differing opinions—was evident in teams where frequent conflicts arose. Some players viewed conflict resolution as necessary for growth and team cohesion, supporting the idea that overcoming disagreements can lead to a stronger norming phase, where players develop trust and cooperation. However, in cases where the coach excessively intervened in minor disputes, players reported a negative impact on cohesion, potentially preventing the team from progressing beyond the storming phase.

These findings align with Alper, Tjosvold, and Law (2000), who found that conflict management strategies directly influence team cohesion and performance. Therefore, while conflict resolution is essential, the timing and method of intervention are crucial in determining whether it fosters unity or deepens divisions.

Trust Within the Team

Trust between players and coaches emerged as a critical factor in team cohesion. The study found that while coaches believed they consistently acted in the best interest of the team, players expressed uncertainty about whether their coaches' decisions truly aligned with team success. Of the nine players from the University of Staffordshire's top sports team, five indicated a lack of trust in their coach's decision-making, particularly in strategic choices and player selection.

These findings align with Jowett and Cockerill's (2003) Coach-Athlete Relationship Model, which highlights the three Cs—closeness, commitment, and complementarity—as essential to fostering trust. Players who felt disconnected from their coach's decision-making process experienced lower levels of commitment and complementarity, which in turn weakened team cohesion. Similar findings were reported by Dupuis, Bloom, and Loughhead (2006), who observed that higher levels of trust between athletes and coaches correlated with improved team performance and morale.

See table D.01 In appendix for table on Coaches' vs Players' Perspective on Trust and Communication

These findings suggest that while coaches perceive their leadership style as supportive, players often feel excluded from the decision-making process, leading to a breakdown in trust. As Brewer and Holmes (2016) emphasize, consistent and transparent communication is essential for building trust in competitive team environments.

Communication Within the Team

It is widely known that in both traditional sports and esports that communication has a huge factor on the success and morale of any team (Brewer and Holmes 2016). This study sought to find if the communication aspect of the team can be boosted through the coach's own behaviour and his communication towards their players. The results showed that the coaches themselves value and desire to have a clear and consistent sense of communication with their players however these feelings weren't always reciprocated, with many responses stating that the communication outside of the "gameday" was terrible and needs improvement, this lack of communication seems to lead to players to doubt the coaches' decisions. All 5 participants who stated that they don't have clear communication expressed a lack of distrust through their coaches' decisions.

These findings highlight the critical role of communication in fostering trust between coaches and players. Consistent pre- and post-game discussions could serve as a potential solution, aligning

with Brewer and Holmes (2016) findings on the role of communication in team performance. The findings also suggest that coaches who engage with their players and encourage open communication (democratic) tend to foster stronger trust and cohesion. In contrast, those who adopt a more authoritarian style, with limited communication and decision-making, often face challenges in maintaining cohesion and trust, particularly when players feel excluded from the decision-making process (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

Traditional Sports Vs Esports

A large proportion of participants answered based on their experiences with traditional sports, with 20% focusing on esports teams. Results showed no significant anomalies, highlighting similarities in how both types of teams are managed. This suggests that traditional sports coaching styles can be applied effectively in esports contexts. It is fair to assume, as with traditional sports, that the management of an esports team varies depending on its size. Smaller teams benefit from direct communication, while larger teams face challenges in coordination and alignment (Zhang, Qiu and Chen, 2024). However, the small proportion of esports-specific responses limits the generalisability of these findings, and future research should explore this further.

It's important to note that while traditional sports coaching techniques, such as the use of democratic and authoritarian approaches, can be applied to esports, the virtual nature of esports teams presents unique challenges. Unlike traditional sports, where face-to-face communication is essential, esports rely heavily on digital communication tools, which can either enhance or hinder team cohesion depending on the coach's ability to adapt their style to the digital environment.

Traditional sports coaching methods have also been applied in esports through ecological and constraints-led approaches, which align well with Social Learning Theory (Stone and Fritz, 2023). Other theories, such as Self-Determination Theory, could offer additional insights into how coaching style influences motivation and cohesion throughout the team environment. Building on these findings, it is clear that coaching strategies play a crucial role in team cohesion across both esports and traditional sports.

While the study provides valuable insights, it is limited by the small sample size of esports players (20%), and future studies should aim to include a more diverse sample to improve the generalisability of these findings. Furthermore, the study focused on university-level players, which may not fully reflect the dynamics of professional esports teams.

Conclusion:

In summary, this study enhances our understanding of how a coach can impact team cohesion through their style of coaching. The results from this study suggest that there is no definitive "best"

way of coaching a team due to the complexity of a team environment, yet there are methods that coaches can use such as; communication, trust and camaraderie to enhance the likelihood of a cohesive team environment. In relation to this study's aims, this proves that the coach's style of teaching can greatly influence the members on their team. These methods tend to be best utilised when in a democratic environment where players feel safe leading to higher levels of team cohesion through the creation of more meaningful relationships. However, these environments may not lead to the creation of the most successful teams as being able to successfully adapt your team to their own style can have greater outcomes in terms of performance.

These findings also revealed the similarities between coaching in traditional sports and esports, proving that the methods of traditional coaching can be directly implemented into the digital world in the form of esports teams. Furthermore, in line with the original objectives of this research which was grounded in Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, findings from this study highlight that players' behaviours are significantly influenced by the actions and behaviours modelled by their peers and coaches.

Based on these insights, it is recommended that esports organisations develop coaching programs focused on positive modelling and reinforcement. Coaches should be trained in leadership, communication, and behaviour management alongside gameplay strategy. Teams should also promote positive peer interactions, given their strong influence on player behaviour. Future research could examine the long-term effects of structured coaching models in esports to strengthen these findings.

Appendix:

Appendix A - Ethics Approval Form:

RESEARCH ETHICS

Proportionate Review Form



The Proportionate Review process may be used where the proposed research raises only minimal ethical risk. This research must: focus on minimally sensitive topics; entail minimal intrusion or disruption to others; and involve participants who would not be considered vulnerable in the context of the research.

PART A: TO BE COMPLETED BY RESEARCHER

Name of Researcher:	Daniel Beeston
School	University of Staffordshire

Student/Course Details (If Applicable)			
Student ID Number:		22015750	
Name of Supervisor(s)/Module Tutor:		Cameron Vanloo	
PhD/MPhil project:	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Taught Postgraduate Project/Assignment:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Award Title:	Esports
Undergraduate Project/Assignment:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Module Title:	Final Year Project

Project Title:	Coaching: Democracy or Dictatorship? Using the social learning theory analyse how a coaches behaviour can influence team cohesion.
Project Outline:	<p>To examine the impacts of differing coaching styles on team cohesion, through the use of qualitative questionnaires looking at current relationships between players and their coaches.</p> <p>The Goal of this research is to analyse and explore the benefits and drawbacks of an authoritarian coaching style compared to its democratic counterpart and how it effects the team cohesion throughout the team by looking at the social learning theory by Albert Bandura. Further linking the findings between traditional sports and esports to compare the similarities and offer a framework for future researchers to explore and learn from.</p>

<p>Give a brief description of participants and procedure (methods, tests etc.)</p>	<p>Participants will be 18+, they have to have at least 1+ years of experience in a setting where they have been in a team with a coach. Traditional sports and esports will both be studied. The majority of participants will be recruited from university sports teams, specifically the University of Staffordshire's Men's Futsal 1's. However, a few participants will be taken from the University of Staffordshire's esports teams. The aspects of recruiting will be originally done over social media platforms such as Discord and snapchat, otherwise I will be asking participants in person to fill out the form.</p> <p>I will ask for an email in the questionnaire so that I can send the participants the results if they want.</p> <p>I will use a mix of purposive sampling, and snowballing sampling to get responses from sports teams that I have been a part of or to gain responses</p>
	<p>from teams people I know are on. I will also use my lectures contacts to acquire data from esports coaches in the current industry to widen my target sampling mass.</p> <p>The research study will be conducted online on "Microsoft Forms", the link to the forms will be posted in whatsapp group chats that I have made specifically for this study. The link will also be posted on discord servers specifically selected to target esports coaches.</p> <p>Consent will be gained via consent forms, participants may request data collected of them at any point.</p> <p>Participants will remain anonymous, so their name will be replaced with another name (making sure it's not the same as anyone else who has taken part in the study)</p> <p>Participants will be offered the choice of receiving the findings from the study.</p> <p>The aim of the research will be explained to participants in advance, and informed of their ability to withdraw participation or consent at any time.</p> <p>This study aims to explore the impact of coaching dynamics on team performance in esports. Using a qualitative approach, we will conduct open-ended questionnaires with players and coaches and analyse the data. Ethical measures include anonymized data handling, secure storage, and transparent participant consent processes. Risks include potential disclosure of sensitive team strategies, emotional stress on participants and a negative effect on the coach-player relationship, mitigated through confidentiality agreements. The expected outcomes will contribute to understanding coaching efficacy and inform practical training models that can help with building team cohesion.</p> <p>Data privacy will be ensured through end-to-end encryption, secure backups, and anonymization during processing. Any breaches will be reported immediately as per university guidelines. To prevent falsified results, raw data</p>

	will be cross-verified by a third-party auditor and subjected to statistical validation methods. As described on the risk assesment.		
Expected Start Date:	05/10/2024	Expected End Date:	15/04/2025 2nd May 2025

Relevant professional body ethical guidelines should be consulted when completing this form.

Please seek guidance from the School Ethics Coordinator if you are uncertain about any ethical issues arising from this application.

There is an obligation on the researcher and supervisor (where applicable) to bring to the attention of the School Ethics Coordinator any issues with ethical implications not identified by this form.

Researcher Declaration

I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications requiring full ethical review	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
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University Research Ethics Committee (February 2018)

I confirm that:		
1.	<p>The research will NOT involve members of vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Vulnerable groups include but are not limited to: children and young people (under 18 years of age), those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, patients, people in custody, people engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug taking), or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	<p>The research will NOT involve sensitive topics.</p> <p>Sensitive topics include, but are not limited to: participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, their gender or ethnic status. The research must not involve groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members, for example, ethnic or cultural groups, native peoples or indigenous communities.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	The research will NOT deliberately mislead participants in any way.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	The research will NOT involve access to records of personal or confidential information, including genetic or other biological information, concerning identifiable individuals.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	<p>The research will NOT induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation, cause more than minimal pain, or involve intrusive interventions.</p> <p>This includes, but is not limited to: the administration of drugs or other substances, vigorous physical exercise, or techniques such as hypnotherapy which may cause participants to reveal information which could cause concern, in the course of their everyday life.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.	<p>The research WILL be conducted with participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main procedure will be explained to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • Participants will be told their involvement in the research is voluntary. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • Written consent will be obtained from participants. <i>(This is not required for self-completion questionnaires as submission of the completed questionnaire implies consent to participate).</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • Participants will be informed about how they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • For questionnaires and interviews: Participants will be given the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • Participants will be told that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, every effort will be made to ensure it will not be identifiable as theirs. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • Participants will be given the opportunity to be debriefed i.e. to find out more <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> about the study and its results. 	<p>YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p>

7.	A risk assessment has been completed for this research project	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

If you are unable to confirm any of the above statements, please complete a **Full Ethical Review Form**. If the research will include participants that are **patients**, please complete the Independent Peer Review process.

B. Information and Data Please provide answers to the following questions regarding the handling and storage of information and data:
a) How will research data be stored (manually or electronically)? Data will be stored electronically on a student secure university onedrive account
b) How is protection given to the participants (e.g. by being made anonymous through coding and with a participant identifier code being kept separately and securely)? The participants will be given the option to remain anonymous during the write up
c) What assurance will be given to the participant about the confidentiality of this data and the security of its storage? Participants will be guaranteed that the information gathered will be stored on a secure device, the information sheet states, "Data will be stored electronically on a student secure university onedrive account"
d) Is assurance given to the participant that they cannot be identified from any publication or dissemination of the results of the project? Yes, their responses will be fully anonymised in any publications. If the participants ask they will be told that they can withdraw from the study at any point, if they choose to withdraw then all the information that has been stored from them will be deleted and not used in the publication. As stated in the information sheet, "Withdrawing from the study will not affect you in any way. You are able to withdraw your data from the study up until 01/03/2025".
e) Who will have access to this data, and for what purposes? The researchers doing this research (myself) will have sole access to the data and its contents, for the purpose of analysis
f) How will the data be stored, for how long, and how will it be discarded? The data will be stored electronically on a secure onedrive account within the university's network and will be destroyed 6 months after the study is finished, 1/10/2025

Supporting Documentation

All key documents e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire/interview schedule are appended to this application.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Signature of Researcher:	Daniel Beeston	Date:	19/11/2024
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NB: If the research departs from the protocol which provides the basis for this proportionate review, then further review will be required and the applicant and supervisor(s) should consider whether or not the proportionate review remains appropriate. If it is no longer appropriate a full ethical review form **MUST** be submitted for consideration by the School Ethics Coordinator .

Next Step:
STUDENTS: Please submit this form (and supporting documentation) for consideration by your Supervisor/ Module Tutor.
STAFF: Please submit this form to your Head of Department or a Senior Researcher in your School. Once they have reviewed the form, this should be forwarded to the Research Administrators in RIIS (ethics@staffs.ac.uk) who will arrange for it to be considered by an independent member of the School's College of Reviewers .


PART B: TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR/MODULE TUTOR (If student) OR Head of Department/ Senior Researcher (if staff)


I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications requiring full ethical review by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have checked and approved the key documents required for this proposal (e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire, interview schedule).	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of Supervisor/ Head of Department/ Senior Researcher:	<i>Cameron Vanloo</i>	Date:	28/04/2025
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Next Step: Please forward this form to the Research Administrators in RIIS (ethics@staffs.ac.uk) who will arrange for it to be considered by an independent member of the School's College of Ethical Reviewers , having no direct connection with the researcher or his/her programme of study.
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<p>This research proposal has been considered using agreed University Procedures and is now approved. Or</p> <p>This research proposal has not been approved due to the reasons given below.</p>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></div> <div><input type="checkbox"/></div>
<p>Recommendation (delete as appropriate): Approve/Amendments required/Reject</p>	

Name of Reviewer:	Dr Ying-Ying Law	Date:	28th April 2025
Signature:			

Signed (School Ethical Coordinator)		Date:	28th April 2025
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Authoritarian Style	This style is characterised by low interpersonal communication between the group, the coach is in charge and makes the decisions for the whole team's benefit. Targets and Goals are set for the team to achieve with discipline being a key principle, it is enforced through rigid supervision of the coach. The coach occupies a non-negotiating position about the team's plans and behaves in an energetic manner in trying to achieve them.
Democratic Style	This style is characterised by shared decision-making. The coach addresses the team for decisions and regards their input as important to their general goal achievement. Interpersonal communication in an open environment is evidenced by a team which exhibits good cohesiveness and team identity (Neil and Kirby 1985). It is important to note that the coach still works as the leader but respects the athletes as individuals, goal setting is set as individuals and as a group. With social aspects of the coach-athlete relationship being seen as important to successful goal achievement.
Laisses-Faire / Nice guy style	This is characterised by decision-making based on the coach's abdication of responsibility. The coach tends to be flexible and concerned with the welfare of the athletes, popular and sociable but lacks leadership ability. This can lead to a sense of equality forming between the coach and athletes, providing a good environment for experimentation and results in cohesive and relaxed teams.

R0.1

Table to show the overall feelings towards the Likert scale questions.

Range of the answers is 121 (-60 to +60), with 5 different possible answers (strongly agree – Strongly disagree). $121 / 5 = 24.2$. The range of each answer needs to be 24.

Question	Total Score	Overall Mean Answer
Do you think your coach fosters an environment where athletes are encouraged to collaborate and help each other improve?	+33	Agree
Do you feel the coaches impact the relationship of teammates?	+41	Strongly Agree
Do you think your coach creates an atmosphere where all players feel valued, regardless of their role on the team?	+9	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Does your coach promote a sense of equality and fairness within the team?	+9	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Does your coach feel approachable if you have any issues going on outside the team?	+26	Agree
Do you always trust your coach's decisions?	+15	Agree
Does your coach show respect for all athletes on the team?	+21	Agree
Is the communication between you and your coach open, clear, consistent, etc.?	+29	Agree
Total score:	+183	

Table to show what score – response total. (Overall)

Answer	Range
Strongly Agree	+60 to +37
Agree	+36 to +13
Neither agree nor disagree	+12 to -12
Disagree	-13 to -36
Strongly Disagree	-37 to -60

R0.2

Table to show the feelings of respondents who stated their coach had a Democratic style towards the Likert scale questions.

Total of 14 Respondents

The range of answers is 57, Minimum score is –28, Maximum score is +28, with 5 different possible answers (strongly agree – Strongly disagree). $57 / 5 = 11.4$. The range of each answer needs to be 11.

Question	Total Score	Overall Mean Answer
Do you think your coach fosters an environment where athletes are encouraged to collaborate and help each other improve?	+20	Strongly agree
Do you feel the coaches impact the relationship of teammates?	+23	Strongly agree
Do you think your coach creates an atmosphere where all players feel valued, regardless of their role on the team?	+5	Neither agree nor disagree
Does your coach promote a sense of equality and fairness within the team?	+8	Agree
Does your coach feel approachable if you have any issues going on outside the team?	+17	Strongly agree
Do you always trust your coach's decisions?	+9	Agree
Does your coach show respect for all athletes on the team?	+13	Agree
Is the communication between you and your coach open, clear, consistent, etc.?	+14	Agree
Total Score:	+109	

Table to show what score – response total. (Democratic)

Answer	Range
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Strongly Agree	+28 to +17
Agree	+16 to + 6
Neither agree nor disagree	+ 5 to –5
Disagree	-6 to -16
Strongly Disagree	-17 to -28

R.03

Table to show the feelings of respondents who stated their coach had an Authoritarian style of coaching towards the Likert scale questions.

Total of 12 Respondents

Range of answers is 49, Minimum score is –24, Maximum score is +24, with 5 different possible answers (strongly agree – Strongly disagree). $49 / 5 = 9.8$. The range of each answer needs to be 9.

Question	Total Score	Overall Mean Answer
Do you think your coach fosters an environment where athletes are encouraged to collaborate and help each other improve?	+8	Agree
Do you feel the coaches impact the relationship of teammates?	+17	Strongly agree
Do you think your coach creates an atmosphere where all players feel valued, regardless of their role on the team?	0	Neither agree nor disagree
Does your coach promote a sense of equality and fairness within the team?	+2	Neither agree nor disagree
Does your coach feel approachable if you have any issues going on outside the team?	+7	Agree
Do you always trust your coach's decisions?	+3	Neither agree nor disagree
Does your coach show respect for all athletes on the team?	+2	Neither agree nor disagree
Is the communication between you and your coach open, clear, consistent, etc.?	+12	Agree

Total Score:	+51	
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Table to show what score – response total. (Authoritarian)

Answer	Range
Strongly Agree	+24 to +15
Agree	+14 to +5
Neither agree nor disagree	+4 to -4
Disagree	-5 to -14
Strongly Disagree	-15 to -24

D.01

Coaches' vs Players' Perspective on Trust and Communication

Theme	Coaches Perspective	Players Perspective	Supporting study
Trust in decisions	Decisions made for overall team success.	Distrust in selection & strategies.	Jowett & Cockerill (2003)
Communication	Regular feedback, open communication.	Poor communication outside of competition.	(Brewer and Holmes 2016)
Conflict Handling	Intervention necessary to resolve disputes	Over-intervention reduces cohesion.	Alper, Tjosvold & Law (2000)

Dissertation diary

Week 1:

Week 1 was spent trying to get rough ideas for my diss, I highlighted some areas that I was interested in studying further but was unsure of how to fully develop these ideas. I knew I wanted to do something related to traditional sports but didn't know what topic exactly. At this point my goal was to find some current data and analyze the structure of past literature, also I needed to see what topics have already been covered.

Week 2:

Week 2 was spent researching and understanding the layout of what I wanted my dissertation to look like, I also started getting ideas on potential topics that I wanted to try. The topics I started with were; “Issues with team chemistry, Issues with dealing with expectations and understanding Issues with team chemistry”. These aren't refined topics or titles, just ideas. I also decided to use qualitative data over quantitative as I think it will be easier for me to collect and write about.

Week 3:

This week I spent researching around the topics, I looked for literature around team environments and the impacts that affect team morale, but I slowly faded from the idea. Instead, I wanted to look at coaching and how I could tailor my dissertation around the idea of how important a coach is for the players. So, I have started brainstorming possible titles. My initial title is “How important coaching is to learn the dark side of the game”. However, I am expecting issues to arise with this topic due to ethics approval.

Week4:

I have decided to work with the idea of the coaching but am struggling to find gaps in the literature/topics that I am interested in, spent the week brainstorming potential Titles and research questions. Ideas that I am exploring are; struggles of a coach, effects of team bonding, psychology of the players, effects of fines and player confidence. I have also started compiling some sources that I will be able to use in my literature review by looking at the university library and google scholar.

Week 5:

It has been a slow week, continuing to look at sources and past literature, I am begging to understand and get an idea for the layout of my dissertation. Notable sources that I have found are “Coaching in Esports – The role of an esports coach.” I have settled on the title question “Coaching: Democracy or Dictatorship. Using the social learning theory to analyze the impact a coach has on team cohesion” as I found that there was very little literature on this topic.

Week 6:

This week has been slow, I have continued to compile sources that I can use for my lit review, I am up to 9 separate pieces of literature that I think will help me. I am happy that my title and idea should be able to pass ethics, after a talk with Cam I have been told to stay away from the psychology a coach has on the players. I also spent the week deciding whether to do primary or secondary data. I have settled on primary as I know plenty of people in traditional sports that can help answer any questions I have. I still need to figure out my data collection method.

Week 7:

I have continued to work on gathering sources and am happy that I should have enough, I'm up to 14 each that I can branch off. This week I also started writing my introduction, it needs refining, but

I am happy with the idea so far. I have also started to make Gantt chart as this was long overdue, this should allow me to keep on top of the workload and stay on track.

Week 8:

This week was spent framing my research question, as originally my question was too long. After some back and forth emails with Josh Lindsay my research question ended "How do different coaching styles, through the process of modeling and imitation, influence team cohesion?". I also started writing my literature review with reference to Watson's work and as well as introducing the social learning theory. I am slightly concerned that my introduction is too long / I have molded the intro and lit review together.

Week 9:

This week I put writing my dissertation to the side instead I spent the week working on my ethics forms, I have filled out the Ethics brief, risk assessment, information sheet, consent form and disclaimer form. I have decided to use purposive sampling and ask students at the university who are part of sports / esports teams. Furthermore, I will be doing this through a qualitative questionnaire that I will need to write.

Week 10:

I'm still waiting on ethics forms to get back, so I just spent the week working on writing my literature review, I am 1000 words into it and am very happy with it so far. I started including studies by House to look at framework on coaches' goals, I also went down the rabbit hole and started looking at the differences between emergent states and team processes that influence the behavior of the players on the team.

Week 11:

This week was much the same as last week, I was working on my literature review. I managed to get another 1000 words wrote out this week this time focusing on areas such as the importance of leadership in coaching roles which further related to the behavior of the coach, I used literature from Jowett and Chaundy to further explain this. The work showed how the coach had a large role to play as the authoritative figure that the players could look up to and respect.

Week 12:

This week was a very relaxed week due to the upcoming Christmas holidays. So far, I'm happy with the progress that I have made and just wanted to have a break from writing. Instead, I tried making a mental note of how I'm going to collect data for my study. I also started asking around to see if people would be willing to fill out the questionnaire if I gave it to them. Currently, I have 10 people who would be more than happy to help.

Christmas Break:

Over the Christmas break, I decided to put some effort into completing my literature review, I used the sources that I had previously found when in the earlier weeks as well as many new sources to write another 2000 words, taking the total word count of my literature review to 4000. I looked specifically at coaching styles by Neil and Kirby (1985), along with topics such as coach-player relationships and team cohesion in social dimensions

Week 13:

This week I had a talk with my lecturer about the next step, I was then told that my literature review had to be only 2200 words maximum as the total essay word count was 6000 and not the 10000 that I had already planned for. This meant that I spent the next few days cutting down my literature review and removing the weaker references that didn't relate to my title. I managed to make some charts to save some words and add a few into the abstract to save some words.

Week 14:

This week I booked in a meeting session with Cam (Lecturer) and we had a talk about my dissertation, my literature review needed some minor tweaks that I have sorted so now it is completed to a good standard. We had a chat about how I was going to collect my primary data, originally, I was toying with the idea of doing interviews but was told that for my research this would be a rough collection method, instead I was recommended to use a qualitative questionnaire. This week I investigated how to write a methodology and what different types of sampling I would use.

Week 15:

During this week I started to write my methodology. By doing this I wrote about potential issues with ethics and the criteria that the respondent must possess to take part. I decided to use thematic analysis to interpret the qualitative data meaning I would find common themes in the respondent's answers. This week I also started to write out the questions for my questionnaire, I initially wanted to use only qualitative questions but am quickly realizing that some Likert scale questions may also be needed.

Week 16:

This week I finished my methodology by adding limitations and justifications, I had to do this for both qualitative and quantitative questions that will be on my questionnaire. I also got my ethics forms back; they just needed some minor tweaks before they could be passed. I needed to add slightly more detail about who is going to be participating. I also had to send a link to my questionnaire which had to be on Microsoft forms and not on Microsoft Word which I had originally been planning. By the end of the week, I had written and sent out the link to my questionnaire to 10 people all who replied, there are 8 Likert scale questions and 10 qualitative questions.

Week 17:

I had another meeting with Cam, where we talked about my questions, Cam filled the form out and sent it into some discord servers with players and coaches in to help me get more responses. By

the end of the week, I had the 30 required responses that I needed to start my data analysis (I asked Cam how much I needed). This week my ethics passed so I am all good to go on.

Week 18:

This week I set myself a goal of writing 100 words a day for my data analysis which I pretty much achieved, I wrote a total of 600 words, this was because I had to sort out the data that I had collected. I inputted all the respondents' answers into an excel sheet so that I could easily see common themes, I wasn't able to write anything about the Likert scale questions as I needed to go to the catalyst to be able to access Spss. I must note that I am unsure whether I have written my results before my data analysis. I might need to go back but will check with a lecturer next week.

Week 19:

I decided to back myself and do some research, I went back and wrote up my data analysis (My plan for analysing the data), this included the methods I will use for both qualitative and quantitative types of questions e.g. using the Likert scale method (Likert 1932). After finishing my data analysis, I continued with writing up my results. I wrote about topics such as conflict and trust within the team but still hadn't done any analysis for the quantitative side.

Week 20:

This week I finally decided to go to the catalyst and use Spss to sort through the Likert scale questions, I gave each response (Strongly agree, Agree, neither agree nor disagree, Disagree and Strongly disagree) an adjacent score from +2 to -2. I totaled up the scores and input them into a table to make the results easier to see.

Week 21:

This week I started writing my discussion, this included writing about democratic vs authoritarian and the traditional sports vs esports arguments. For these I had to use different calculations to prove/disprove which coaching method is more successful.

Week 22:

I continued my discussion this time writing about replication of behavior as I wanted to make sure that I linked the discussion part of the diss back to the social learning theory, I finished the week by writing about conflict and communication within the team as well. This was primarily focused on the coach's role within the team and how their behavior can impact the variables.

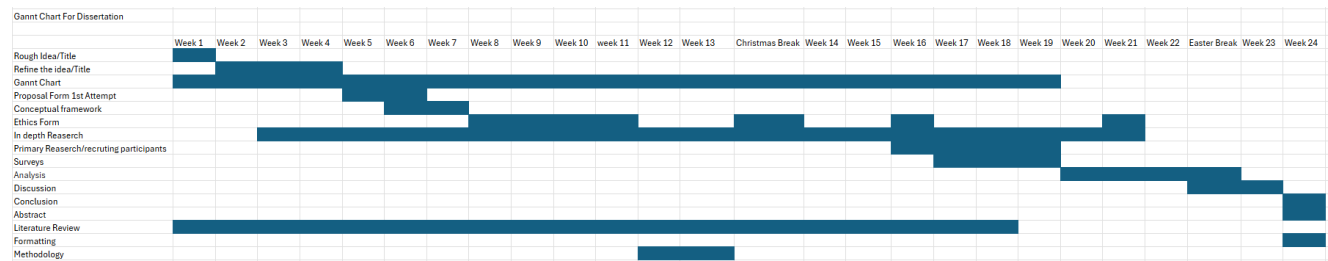
Week 23:

This week I Moved onto my conclusion i tied together the key points throughout the dissertation and made some recommendations for any future work in the area. Finally, I went back to the start to write my abstract making sure to give a short but detailed summary of what the piece of work was about.

Week 24:

Last week of the project I sent over the “finished” piece of work to my supervisor asking for any obvious mistakes that I have made. Turns out my formatting was not the best so I spent a few hours making the recommended changes to make sure that the work was as professional as possible. I also inputted my Gantt chart which i had been working on.

Gantt Chart



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