

## **TEAMWORK AS A FACTOR OF SUCCESS ON THE WOMEN'S SENIOR BASKETBALL TEAM OF SERBIA**

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### **Abstract**

A team includes people who have the necessary abilities, knowledge and skills, and who are committed to achieving a common goal. Basketball is a team sport which requires teamwork. Also, basketball involves ongoing cooperation between the players and the coaching staff with the aim of achieving better results. To achieve excellent results, all individuals must work as a team to maintain good interpersonal communication, motivation, and respect, which is the subject of this paper. The primary goal is to show the importance of teamwork and the degree to which it influences the success of the women's senior basketball team of Serbia. We conducted a survey using the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire, and the obtained results showed that teamwork played a key role in achieving success.

**Keywords:** teamwork, national team, basketball, women

### **Introduction**

With extensive and complex tasks that require different skills and knowledge, or consist of a series of actions that must be performed at the same time, there is a clear need for teamwork. A true team is characterized by a high degree of unity in defining the goals, winning mentality, harmony and mutual complementarity of team members, flexibility of opinion, ability to learn together, overcome conflicts, etc.

As a team sport, basketball represents cooperation of all the players involved, while it also depends on the personal qualities of each individual. However, individual characteristics of players would not be visible without their interdependence and teamwork. Therefore, we can say that the best team is not just a collection of players composed of the best individuals. Instead, it is a team in which individuals best cooperate in their mutual interaction.

Basketball team characteristics are reflected in the good atmosphere within the team and the positive "chemistry" that prevails. Creating such an atmosphere involves all individuals - players, coach, coaching staff, and their interpersonal relations on and off the court.

Successful teams, above all, have good communication, manifested propensity for teamwork, good leadership on the team, synergy among team members, equal participation in the performance of tasks, exchange of opinions, ideas, attitudes, creativity, and so on. Each team member must possess certain characteristics, and some of them include patience, tolerance, and cooperation.

### **Subject, Goal and Methodology**

The goal of the paper is teamwork and its impact on the success of the women's senior basketball team of Serbia. Teamwork in basketball, due to group synergy, can lead to a higher level of efficiency and better results.

The goal of the paper is to show the importance and benefit of teamwork in the women's senior basketball team of Serbia, as well as its importance and influence on achieving top sports results and the success of the team.

We used deductive, historical and descriptive methods in the paper, and data were collected using the interviewing technique.

Research was done in the form of a questionnaire, conducted by means of e-mail. The study involved women's senior basketball team of Serbia. Of the 12 players the questionnaire was completed by 8, making a total of 67%. To analyze the satisfaction of athletes we used the translation of the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire put together by Riemer & Chelladurai. The questionnaire in its original version consists of 15 categories assessed by athletes. Categories show satisfaction of players with sporting achievement, and can be used for improving teamwork. Categories in the questionnaire are: individual performance, team performance, using the skills, strategies, personal treatment, training and instructions, contribution to the team's task, contribution to the social aspect of the team, ethics, team integration, personal commitment, budget, medical staff, academic support service, and external factors. In this paper, we did not use the budget and academic support categories.

Answers are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 7, and evaluations are indicated in the range of 1-2 (I'm completely satisfied), 3-5 (I'm somewhat satisfied) and 6-7 (I'm totally satisfied). Results are expressed as the mean value of the response of each respondent in a range of 1 to 7.

## **The Importance of Teamwork**

In any efficient organization, it is necessary for the team to have a key place so that the entire system can function properly. Personal skills of each individual are very important, but priority should be given to the organization and its human resources as a whole, and to the well composed team in which individual skills play a role.

Thanks to group synergy, a higher level of productivity and efficiency can be achieved with teamwork, given that shared resources within the team provide greater and better results compared to the individual works and effects. Working on a team, where roles are complementary, contributes to the maximum expression of potential of each member, so that every individual shows the greatest abilities, skills and knowledge, which leads to superior achievements of the team.

The advantage of teamwork is found in the variety and quantity of knowledge, skills, experiences, opinions, attitudes, ideas, and everything that members bring to the team. Teamwork is used to achieve better results, working discipline is increased, complaints and dissatisfaction of members are reduced, there is a greater degree of willingness to take risks, etc. (Avlijas, 2010, 220).

In order for the team to be successful, the most important task is to create conditions that help team members achieve common goals together. Some of the factors for a successful team are: division of roles, common goal, communication and trust, and diversity.

Communication is one of the main factors for success in a team. Proper communication is a very important factor for success because it provides team synergy. The important role in the success is also played by the leader who directs activities of the team toward a common goal. This means that the leader, along with other team members, creates an atmosphere in which every member can express his opinion without compromising the right of other members to their own opinion. The leader should also promote collaborative relationships between team members, promote team spirit, help in making timely decisions, maintain discipline on the team, etc.

## **Team Formation and Development**

Forming a team is a very complex task because teams are specific groups with much more complex characteristics than is the case with other groups. During the formation of the team, team members getting to know each other plays an important role, and so does definition of tasks, powers and

responsibilities, determining the role of individuals, understanding the purpose and objectives by team members, and so on. Leadership plays an important role in the process of forming a team.

Socialization is an important element of the working culture of every man. When an individual becomes a member of the team s/he must learn how to communicate and work with other members to perform tasks in a successful manner. Socialization is aimed at a certain degree of social uniformity, which is necessary to make the team more efficient. Successful integration into the new environment is an important prerequisite for long-term cooperation, motivation to work, creating a positive working environment for smooth operation, and achieving good results.

Trust is a fundamental characteristic of high performance teams, whose members believe in integrity, character and abilities of others. Teams whose members manage to build a sufficient level of trust work more efficiently, information is exchanged freely, without fear that a member of the team will misuse it, problems are solved together, and mistakes are not disguised (Petkovic, 2003, 118).

Successful teams should have a leader who will be the backbone of the team, provide support to team members, be good organization skills, and have specific personality strength with which s/he can make a positive impact. The leader directs the activities of other people towards achieving their common goal. The role of the leader is not only in shaping the behavior of people on the team, but also in gathering, motivating and persuading people to believe in a certain vision and to follow it.

Teamwork can be characterized by multiple problems, from poor selection of team members, disturbed interpersonal relationships, conflicts, poor communication, to many internal and external factors. Conflicts are a natural occurrence when it comes to teamwork because teams are complex communities of people with different characters, value systems, and goals. When there are different traits and behaviors, there is always the possibility of misunderstanding and even open conflict. Conflicts can help see all the problems, expound all possible solutions, and eventually to apply the better ones. After a positive decision, sometimes one feels the increase of mutual understanding and openness among members, improved interpersonal relationships, growing trust, and team cohesion.

## **Team Success**

Successful teams are characterized by a high degree of unity in defining their goals and priorities, winning mentality, harmony and complementarity of the members, flexibility in opinions, ability to listen, constructive discussion, mutual learning ability, steadily overcoming conflicts, supporting associates, and so on. In order for the team to be successful, all team members must be motivated and have the desire to succeed. Some of the characteristics of successful teams are: open communication, trust, mutual support, focus on a common goal, and clearly divided roles and responsibilities.

Motivation is very important and it's closely associated with job satisfaction. That's why it's important for every employee to know herself, as well as the legality of motivation to use the management of the factors that contribute to motivation, and raise the level of own motivation, increase the chance to achieve business objectives, and thus raise the level of job satisfaction.

The motivational process is complex because people have different needs, set different goals to meet their needs, and undertake various actions to achieve goals. The leader should have a major role in motivating team members to be able to give their best by using motivational resources provided by the organization.

## **The Importance of Trust and Motivation for Success**

Trust is the basis for good cooperation both in business and in sports relations. Having confidence in your team and the people who are part of the team means believing in their consistency and benevolence in joint activities.

The special relationship that a coach has with the players and with her associates is primarily based on mutual trust. She expects the best from the coaching staff, as well as the players, at all times, and is always looking for more because she doesn't want to miss even the smallest detail. From the beginning she creates an atmosphere of community, mutual respect, and trust. The relationship with the team must always be honest and a function of the success of the whole team.

Motivation is essential for success, both on the personal level as well as in any kind of sporting or any other environment. When we talk about sports and sporting events, motivation plays an important role for success.

Coaching staff of the women's senior basketball team of Serbia attaches great importance to motivation of players, creating the winning mentality of the team because when players are motivated to stand up and make an effort to achieve the goal they have a far greater advantage over an opponent, which

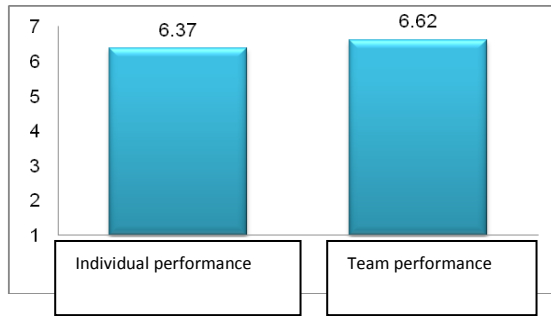
may be a physical stronger team, but is not motivated in the right way. Players have a strong competitive spirit, they like to compete, believe in one another, in themselves and in the team, and therefore are successful and in the critical and most difficult moments of the game take responsibility at the time of the greatest pressure, and enjoy most when playing against the best opponents, even when there is a possibility of defeat. In other words, they do not give up until the last moment and are uncompromising against the opponent. Success has to come when they believe in themselves and in the team.

## **Research Results**

Research results are presented by questionnaire categories (individual performance, team performance, use of skills, strategies, personalized treatment, training and instructions, contribution to the team's task, contribution to the social aspect of the team, ethics, team integration, personal commitment, medical staff and external factors), the mean value is determined for the whole sample, and based on the obtained results we have gained insight into the satisfaction of players.

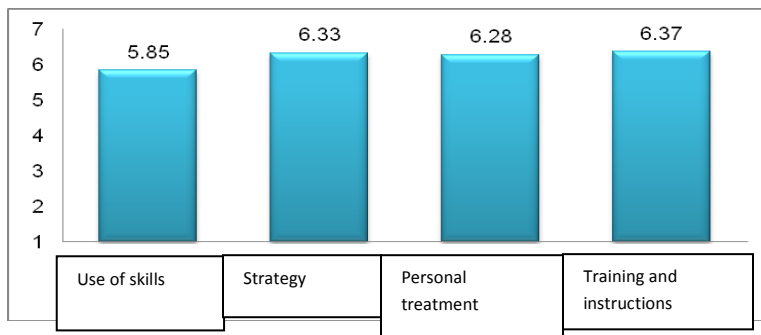
Many factors depend on individual performance, from physical training to psychological readiness for competition. Physical preparation of athletes is important because it reflects the ability of the athlete to achieve maximum sports achievements, however, the psychological preparation allows the athlete to achieve the stated objectives. Based on the results which are shown in Figure 1, we can see that the mean value for satisfaction with individual performance is 6.37 on a scale of 1-7, which shows that 91% of respondents are satisfied.

As part of the team performance (Figure 1), the results show a high level of satisfaction with team performance. As much as 94.57% of respondents are satisfied with the overall team performance and with reaching their goals, while the mean value is 6.62.



**Figure 1.** Overview of the mean value for the categories of individual performance and team performance

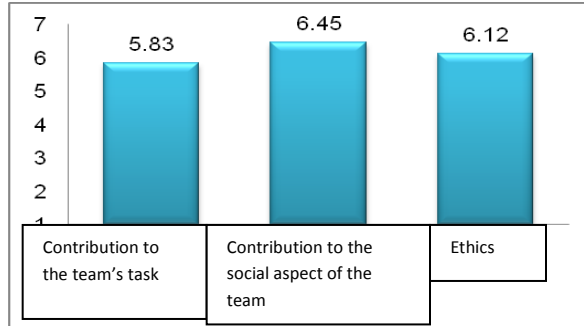
Questions relating to the use of skills received slightly lower scores. When asked about the satisfaction with the coach’s individual use of talents and skills of the players, the average score was 5.85 (83.57%), which was lower than expected. Choice of strategy and players throughout the competition, and tactical decisions of the coach satisfy 90.42% of respondents, with an average score of 6.33. The behavior of the coach that has a direct impact on the development of individuals, and indirectly on the development of the team, and includes social support and positive feedback, satisfies 89.71% of respondents, with an average score of 6.28. Questions relating to the training and instructions that the players receive from the coach received higher scores, with an average of 6.37, which means that 91% of respondents are satisfied. (Figure 2)



**Figure 2.** Overview of the mean value for categories use of skills, strategy, personal treatment, and training and instructions

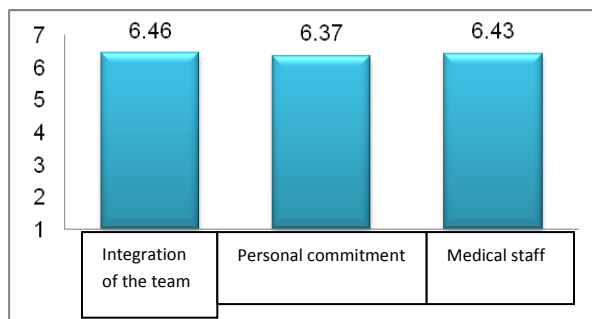
Satisfaction with the contribution to the team’s task, and with the procedures related to feedback, guidance and advice that players receive from their fellow teammates is 83.28%, with an average score of 5.83, while the social

status on the team and the contribution to the social aspect on the team satisfies incomparably more respondents, 92.14%, with an average score of 6.45. Ethical attitudes, a sense of fair play and sporting behavior of fellow teammates satisfies 87.42% of respondents, with an average score of 6.12 (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Overview of the mean value for categories of contribution to the team's task, contribution to the social aspect of the team, and ethics

Questions related to the integration of the team, and what the team is doing to become better, satisfaction with the level of acceptance of the common goal, commitment of team members, desire to work together to achieve team goals, as well as the degree to which all the players work as a team, show that the individual responses of respondents are similar and the average score is 6.46, based on which we can see that this segment satisfies 92.28% of respondents. Own personal contribution and commitment to the team satisfies 91% of respondents, and the mean score is 6.37. Medical staff on the team and their commitment satisfies 91.85%, with an average score of 6.43 (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Overview of the mean value for the three categories of integration of the team, personal commitment and medical staff

External factors and media support to the team, support of fans and other elements that are outside the team that can significantly contribute to the success provide satisfaction for 88% of respondents, with a mean score of 6.16.

Based on the results shown in Table 1, we can conclude that respondents are the most satisfied with the team performance, with an average score of 6.62, and the team integration, with an average score of 6.46, indicating a high level of team efficiency.

**Table 1.** Mean values of the results (M) in the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire

Categories	M
Individual Performance	6.37
Team Performance	6.62
Use of Skills	5.85
Strategy	6.33
Personal Treatment	6.28
Training and Instructions	6.37
Contribution to the Team's Task	5.83
Contribution to the Social Aspect of the Team	6.45
Ethics	6.12
Team Integration	6.46
Personal Commitment	6.37
Medical Staff	6.43
External Factors	6.16

## Conclusion

When there is mutual respect and trust among team members and striving for achievement of common goals, then we need to emphasize the importance of teamwork as a factor in the success of the team. Successful communication and motivation among team members play a very important role in achieving good results.

We obtained significant results in the conducted survey. Given that teamwork is one of the most important factors of success of the women's senior basketball team of Serbia, using the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire it has been proven that the players are most satisfied with the team performance, team integration, as well as personal commitment to the team, which is the basis for success in team sports, thus in basketball, and it involves adaptability, readiness for cooperation and responsibility. The feeling of satisfaction that occurs when a team achieves something great, valuable or important will encourage the team to aspire to such achievements again in the future. When a team achieves success, it's not just because an individual is taking part in an activity that involves cooperation with others, but because cooperation with others is successful. When all team members have common goals and skills that work in synergy, then the virtues of each individual come to light and become useful, while faults remain hidden. The key to success of the team is in the mutual assistance and facilitation with the execution of tasks.

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## Appendix

### Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire

**INSTRUCTIONS:** This questionnaire lists statements related to taking part in sports. A response ranging from 1 (not satisfied at all) to 7 (I'm totally satisfied) is given across from each statement. Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following aspects of your sport. Do not think too much about any of the statements. It is enough that your response is honest and spontaneous.

I am satisfied with		I'm not satisfied at all		I'm somewhat satisfied			I'm completely satisfied	
1.	what the team is doing to be the best.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	my social position on the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	the coach's choice of players during the games.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	the expertise of the medical staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	the degree to which I'm giving my best to the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	the degree to which I'm achieving my competitive goals this season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	the degree to which my skills (potential) are being used.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	the degree of ethics (morality) of all team members	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	the degree to which my teammates are giving me advice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	the medical support to our team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	the recognition I receive from my coach.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	team performance this season – win-loss record.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	the quality of training I receive from my coach.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	the care the coach expresses for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	my commitment to practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	a sense of fair play that my teammates have.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	the degree to which my teammates have accepted the common goal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	impartiality the medical staff treats all the players with.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	coach's friendly attitude towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	guidance I get from my teammates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	the improvement of my performance last season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	the instructions I get from the coach this season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	the degree of utilization of my sporting talent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24.	the role I play in the social life of the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	the tactics that were used in games/competitions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	the overall team performance this season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	coach's choice of strategy for the games.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

28.	my enthusiasm during the competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	the sporting behavior of my teammates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	commitment of team members to the desire to work together (effort) to achieve the team goal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	training that the coach provides me with in terms of tactics and techniques related to my position.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	constructive feedback that I get from my teammates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	the degree to which my teammates have accepted me socially (socializing).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34.	the degree to which my role is aligned with my potential.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35.	the degree to which the team meets the goals set for this season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36.	improvement of the level of my skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37.	praise I get from the coach when I do a good job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	care of the medical staff for athletes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39.	support of the fans.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40.	how coach makes corrections (adjustments) during the game.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41.	the coach's loyalty to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42.	my commitment to the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43.	game time I get in a game.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44.	the degree to which me and my teammates work as a team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45.	support from the local community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46.	the speed of medical intervention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47.	coach's game plan (performance).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48.	the degree to which my role on the team is in line with my preferred position.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49.	the degree to which my coach supports me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50.	the way the coach combines the available talent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7