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Titel abstract: Gathering Strength in Numbers: Team cohesion increases precompetitive excitement and decreases precompetitive anxiety through enhanced self-efficacy

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Gathering Strength in Numbers: Team cohesion increases precompetitive excitement and decreases precompetitive anxiety through enhanced self-efficacy

**Authors:**

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**Introduction:**

High levels of team cohesion are associated with many benefits, including more adaptive emotional responses to competition (Wolf, Eys, & Kleinert, 2014). Prior to targeting cohesion as an emotion regulation strategy, however, we need to test whether greater cohesion actually improves emotions and how it operates. In this study, we aimed to investigate causal relations between team cohesion and precompetitive excitement and anxiety, while exploring the mediating role of self-efficacy.

**Method:**

We conducted a between-subjects experiment in which 203 team sport athletes randomly read one of four scenarios describing different constellations of cohesion (i.e., High Social High Task, HSHT; High Social Low Task, HSLT; Low Social High Task, LSHT; Low Social Low Task, LSLT) and reported their excitement and anxiety (Jones, Lane, Bray, Uphill, & Catlin, 2005) as well as their self-efficacy (Coffee & Rees, 2008, 2009) regarding a hypothetical pending game.

**Results:**

In line with our hypotheses, results of a one-way ANOVA showed differences in precompetitive emotions between cohesion conditions. Participants in the HSHT condition reported the highest excitement ( $f = .35$ ) and lowest anxiety ( $f = .21$ ) and athletes in the LSLT condition reporting the lowest excitement. Mixed conditions (i.e., HSLT, LSHT) did not differ from each other. Further, a mediation analysis supported that cohesion's effect on precompetitive emotions operated indirectly through self-efficacy with cohesion condition predicting self-efficacy (HSHT > HSLT = LSHT > LSLT), which, in turn positively predicted excitement ( $b = -.31$ , 95% BCa CI [-0.47, -0.19]) and negatively predicted anxiety ( $b = .20$ , 95% BCa CI [0.12, 0.33]).

**Discussion:**

It appears as if the team environment influences the cognitions and emotions with which athletes approach a competition. Because perceptions of greater cohesion led to more adaptive precompetitive emotions, the team environment and cohesion-building in particular may provide an effective approach for emotion regulation.

**References:**

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- Jones, M. V, Lane, A. M., Bray, S. R., Uphill, M., & Catlin, J. (2005). Development and validation of the Sport Emotion Questionnaire. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 27*, 407–431.
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