A Comparative Analysis of Performance Indicators between Winning and Losing Teams in Women's Football

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ABSTRACT

Women's football has grown rapidly in participation, competitiveness, and visibility across the world. As the level of play continues to improve, understanding the performance indicators that differentiate winning and losing teams has become an important area of research for coaches, analysts, and sports scientists. The purpose of this study is to examine key technical, tactical, and physical performance indicators that contribute to match outcomes in women's football. The paper synthesizes available literature, analyzes commonly observed patterns in competitive matches, and interprets how specific variables such as ball possession, passing accuracy, shots on target, defensive actions, and transition efficiency correlate with success. Results from existing research and comparative insights suggest that successful teams often demonstrate higher efficiency in ball circulation, create more goal-scoring opportunities, win more duels, and minimize defensive errors. The study concludes by highlighting practical implications for training and future research directions..

Keywords :

Introduction

Women's football has witnessed tremendous growth in the last two decades, both at the professional and collegiate levels. Increased investment, improved coaching quality, sports science integration, and global exposure through tournaments such as the FIFA Women's World Cup have significantly improved the standard of play. Along with this growth, the need for objective performance analysis has become greater. Modern football relies heavily on data-driven decision-making, with match statistics playing a crucial role in evaluating team performance.

Performance indicators are measurable variables that provide insights into a team's technical ability, tactical behavior, physical output, and psychological readiness during competition. These indicators help coaches understand why teams win or lose, identify strengths and weaknesses, and design more effective training programs. In women's football, although research is increasing, there remains a gap in understanding which specific indicators most strongly influence match outcomes.

This research paper aims to comparatively analyse performance indicators between winning and losing teams in women's football. By reviewing literature and integrating practical insights from match analysis, the study identifies key factors associated with successful performance and provides recommendations for coaches and sports scientists.

Review of Literature

Multiple researchers have examined performance determinants in football, though studies focusing exclusively on women's football remain fewer compared to men's.

Archer et al. (2019) found that winning women's teams generally exhibit higher ball possession and passing accuracy. Gréhaigne (2015) highlighted the importance of transition play, where quick movement from defence to attack often leads to successful scoring opportunities. Furthermore, Lago Ballesteros & Lago Peñas (2010) emphasized the importance of shots on target as a strong predictor of match outcomes.

Research on women's football specifically shows unique tactical patterns. González Rodenas et al. (2021) observed that winning teams create a greater number of attacks through wide areas, taking advantage of speed and crossing ability. Another study by Bradley et al. (2014) noted that physical intensity in high-speed running contributes significantly to offensive actions in elite women's matches.

Kumar and Mishra (2018) examined how different physical fitness variables influence football performance among college-level women players. Their study highlighted that aerobic endurance, agility, lower body strength, and speed are the most significant predictors of effective match performance. They found that players with higher fitness levels demonstrated better ball control, faster movement during transitions, and improved ability to maintain intensity throughout the game. The authors concluded that targeted fitness training plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall performance of women football players.

Defensive indicators have also been studied. Winning teams frequently demonstrate better defensive compactness, fewer fouls, and higher recovery rates in midfield zones

(Yi et al., 2020). Match analyses from international tournaments consistently reveal that winning teams commit fewer turnovers in dangerous defensive zones.

Overall, literature supports that technical precision, tactical organization, and physical intensity are major determinants of success, but more comparative data specific to women's football is needed. This study contributes to this growing body of work.

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of this research are:

- To identify key technical performance indicators that differentiates winning and losing women's football teams.
- To compare tactical indicators such as possession, defensive organization, and transition play.
- To interpret how physical performance indicators contribute to match outcomes.
- To provide practical implications for coaches, players, and analysts to enhance competitive performance.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative and comparative research approach. A narrative review of previous studies, match reports, and performance statistics from major women's football tournaments including collegiate leagues, national championships, and FIFA competitions was conducted.

Key performance indicators analyzed include:

1. Possession (%)

2. Passing accuracy (%)

3. Shots & shots on target

4. Expected Goals (xG)

5. Crosses completed

6. Successful tackles & interceptions

7. High-intensity runs

8. Ball recoveries in midfield & defensive third

9.   Transition efficiency (counterattack success rate)

10.   Goalkeeping performance indicators

Data was compared to identify consistent patterns distinguishing winning and losing teams. The discussion integrates literature findings and practical match analysis to present a comprehensive understanding.

Results and Discussion

1.   Technical Performance Indicators

1.1. Passing Accuracy and Ball Circulation

Winning teams typically maintain higher passing accuracy, especially in the middle and attacking third. Studies show that passing accuracy above 75% is common among winning sides, while losing teams often fall below 68–70%.

Better passing accuracy allows winning teams to:

- Control tempo
- Progress the ball more effectively
- Reduce turnovers

Women's teams that struggle with passing precision often find themselves defending more, which contributes to match losses.

1.2   Shots and Shots on Target

One of the strongest predictors of winning is the number of shots on target. While losing teams may take similar numbers of shots, the difference lies in quality of shooting opportunities.

Winning teams:

- Create more high-percentage chances
- Shoot more often from inside the penalty area
- Have higher expected goals (xG) (team created better, higher-quality scoring chances)

Losing teams often rely on long-range attempts, which rarely produce goals.

1.3 Dribbling and 1v1 Success

Women's football has seen increasing emphasis on individual attacking skills. Winning teams often have wingers or forwards with high dribble success rates, contributing to:

- Chance creation
- Overloads on the wings
- Defensive disorganization of opponents

Losing teams show reduced effectiveness in 1v1 situations, limiting their ability to break defensive lines.

2.   Tactical Performance Indicators

2.1. Possession Percentage

Possession is not always a guarantee of victory, but trends show that winning teams generally maintain 55–60% possession in women's matches. Possession allows for sustained attacks and reduces defensive fatigue. However, counterattacking teams with low possession can also win, provided their transitions are efficient.

2.2. Transition Play

Transition moments moving from defence to attack or attack to defence are critical in women's football.

Winning teams exhibit:

- quicker transitions
- shorter time from ball recovery to shot attempt
- higher counterattack success rates

Losing teams often fail to reorganize quickly, leading to goals conceded during defensive transitions.

2.3 Defensive Organization

Winning teams maintain better defensive compactness, demonstrated by:

- fewer defensive errors
- better backline coordination
- lower xG conceded (team created poor-quality or fewer scoring chances)

- more interceptions in midfield

Losing teams generally allow more gaps between midfield and defence, making them vulnerable to through balls and wing attacks.

3. Physical Performance Indicators

Women's football has seen significant increases in physical demands.

3.1. High-Intensity Running

Studies show that winning teams tend to perform more high-speed runs, particularly in the final third. This contributes to:

- quicker attacks
- more pressing actions
- better defensive recovery
- Physical conditioning therefore directly influences match outcomes.

3.2. Sprinting Ability

Sprints during counterattacks, wing runs, and defensive recovery are strongly correlated with success. Winning teams perform more sprints in critical phases of the match.

3.3. Aerobic Capacity

Higher aerobic fitness allows winning teams to maintain intensity throughout the match. Losing teams often show decreased endurance in the final 20 minutes, leading to late goals conceded.

4. Psychological and Game-Management Indicators

Though more difficult to measure, psychological factors also affect match outcomes.

Winning teams often demonstrate:

- better decision-making under pressure
- higher confidence in possession
- effective communication
- composure in critical moments (finishing, defending set pieces)

Losing teams may show signs of anxiety, hesitation, and tactical confusion, especially after conceding goals.

Comparative Summary of Winning vs. Losing Teams

Performance Indicator	Winning Teams	Losing Teams
Passing Accuracy	High (above 75%)	Lower (below 70%)
Shots on Target	More and higher-quality	Fewer, long-range
Possession	Moderate to high	Often lower
Transition Efficiency	Very effective	Slow and inconsistent
Defensive Errors	Minimal	More frequent
High-Intensity Runs	Higher volume	Lower and inconsistent
Counterattacks	Quick and purposeful	Ineffective or rare
1v1 Success	High	Low
Set-Piece Execution	More effective	Poor finishing & marking

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several actionable suggestions for coaches and teams:

a. *Emphasize Passing and Build-Up Play*

Training drills should target passing precision under pressure, positional play, and movement to create passing lanes.

b. *Improve Finishing Ability*

Teams should focus on:

- shooting from inside the box
- high-quality goal-scoring opportunities
- composure in front of goal

c. *Strengthen Transition Drills*

Fast-attacking transition drills and defensive recovery runs must be incorporated regularly.

d. *Enhance Physical Conditioning*

Women's teams should implement programs focusing on:

- sprint training

- aerobic conditioning
- strength and agility development

e. *Tactical Discipline*

Coaches must prioritize:
- defensive compactness
- communication between lines
- pressing strategy

f. *Psychological Training*

Confidence-building, decision-making drills and pressure-simulation activities can improve mental resilience.

Conclusion

This study highlights that performance indicators play a critical role in determining match outcomes in women's football. Winning teams consistently demonstrate higher levels of technical proficiency, tactical organization, and physical intensity. Key differentiators include passing accuracy, shot quality, possession strategies, efficient transitions, and defensive stability. The comparative analysis shows that success in women's football is multi-dimensional. Technical skill alone is insufficient; tactical awareness, fitness levels, and psychological factors collectively shape team performance. Coaches and analysts can use these indicators to refine training methods and match strategies.

As women's football continues to grow, more research is required to deepen the understanding of performance metrics, especially using modern tools such as GPS data, analytics software, and biomechanical analysis. This research contributes to bridging that gap and provides a foundation for future work.

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