



Knowledge Management in Botswana Sport: Current Status and Future Directions

Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

Louis Moustakas^{*A-E} , Arda Alan Işık^{B-E}

Institute for European Sport Development and Leisure Studies, German Sport University, Cologne, Germany

Received: 22.03.2021
Accepted: 15.07.2021

***Correspondence:** Institute for European Sport Development and Leisure Studies, German Sport University, Cologne, Germany l.moustakas@dshs-koeln.de,

Abstract

In Botswana, sport is positioned as a potential driver of economic and social development. In particular, there are numerous discussions about increasing the socio-economic impact of sport and the need to professionalise Botswana sport. Knowledge Management (KM) can play a critical role in achieving this greater professionalisation and impact. Despite this importance, there have only been a small number of studies on KM in sports, and none of this literature explores the topic in sub-Saharan Africa. Against this background, the goals of our paper are two-fold. Firstly, we wish to map out the current knowledge management landscape in the Botswana sport sector. Secondly, we aim to propose concrete, evidence-based avenues to improve KM within the sector. This paper relies on findings generated through semi-structured qualitative interviews with individuals connected to Botswana sport. To allow for triangulation, these interviews are further supported by other, previous qualitative research as well as relevant academic and policy literature. The Knowledge Management framework from Sunassee and Sewry (2002) is used to analyse and structure the results. Overall, we see that KM in Botswana sport is somewhat present at the individual, organisational level, but numerous obstacles and inefficiencies exist in creating and sharing knowledge at the sectoral level. To support the growth of KM in the sector, numerous concrete recommendations are presented. In particular, we highlight a need to communicate the value of KM better and obtain the necessary buy-in.

Key words: Sport management, knowledge management, Botswana, technology

Introduction

Despite the country's relatively small population, sport in Botswana is well developed and plays an important societal role. Accordingly, its sport system is diverse and complex, featuring the government, the Botswana National Sport Commission (BNSC), the Botswana National Olympic Committee and over 30 National Sport Federations (NSFs) (Moustakas & Tshube, 2020). As a result of this size and importance, there have long been ambitions to commercialise sport and increase its socio-economic impact. The economy is heavily dependent on the mining sector (Jefferis, 2009), and there is a need to diversify sources of economic growth to ensure sustainable, long-term prosperity. Sport is often positioned as one of the solutions to this challenge. For instance, the BNSC Vision 2028

strategic document aims for sport to contribute 0.5% of the country's GDP (Botswana National Sports Council, 2013). In addition, sport can potentially play a role in supporting various sustainable health and educational development outcomes in the country (Moustakas & Işık, 2020). Parallel to conversations about increasing the economic and social impact of sport, there has been an accompanying discourse around the need to professionalise sport in Botswana. In other words, this should be understood as moving the sport sector away from being primarily non-profit, volunteer-run and publicly funded towards a self-sustaining sector with paid staff.

Knowledge Management (KM) can play a critical role in achieving this greater professionalisation, commercialisation and societal impact. In an increasingly globalised and digital world, KM is essential for success in both the public and private sectors (Ahmed & Elhag, 2017). The processes associated with KM, such as knowledge creation and sharing, are essential drivers of performance and innovation, both in general and in the sport sector (Ahmed & Elhag, 2017; Delshab & Sadeghi Boroujerdi, 2018; Mohsen Allameh, Khazaei Pool, Jaber, & Mazloomi Soveini, 2014; O'Reilly & Knight, 2007). Indeed, given the Botswana sport sector's predominantly volunteer-based nature (Moustakas, 2018), KM can be essential to manage and maximise limited resources. Despite this importance, literature on KM in sports remains an emerging topic (e.g. Delshab & Sadeghi Boroujerdi, 2018; Girginov, Toohey, & Willem, 2015; Mohsen Allameh et al., 2014; O'Reilly & Knight, 2007), and no articles were located that explore the topic in sub-Saharan Africa. There is limited literature on sport in the region and a corresponding need to understand environmental and managerial realities to support its advancement.

Against this background, the goals of our paper are two-fold. Firstly, we wish to generate an initial mapping of the Botswana sport sector's current knowledge management landscape. Secondly, based on this mapping, we aim to propose concrete, evidence-based avenues to improve KM within the sector. Ultimately, we argue that this understanding and subsequent improvements can play an important role in the sustainable professionalisation and socio-economic contribution of sport in Botswana. To support our analysis, we dissect our results through the lens of Knowledge Management and, more specifically, the conceptual framework proposed by Sunassee & Sewry (2002). Findings are generated through a combination of semi-structured interviews (including from Moustakas, 2020), document analysis and first-hand experience in the Botswana sport sector.

Moving forward, our paper proceeds in three steps. First, we present the concept of knowledge management and the associated framework in more depth. Then, we map out the current state of KM in Botswana sport against this Framework. Finally, we propose concrete pathways for improvement based on the mapping exercise, thus concluding the paper.

Conceptual framework

To start, it is crucial to define and distinguish the key terms used in the following article. Therefore, there is a need to define the concept of *knowledge* before delving into a discussion of *knowledge management*. In management, knowledge is generally defined as a combination of insights, understandings, and practical know-how. In other words, knowledge can be understood as the process of applying expertise (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). As for Knowledge Management (KM), there are numerous definitions of the term (for a review, see Ahmed & Elhag, 2017), but at its core can be understood as the process of creating, sharing, organising, and using knowledge (Girard & Girard, 2015; O'Reilly & Knight, 2007). Similarly, looking at the sport context, Delshab et al. (2019) identify five component processes within KM, namely the acquisition, creation, storage, sharing and application of knowledge.

The importance of KM is recognised across various sectors, including in the private and public spheres. Improved KM is essential for organisational growth and survival, and can contribute to learning, innovation and task effectiveness (Ahmed & Elhag, 2017; O'Reilly & Knight, 2007). From a sport-specific perspective, KM allows sport organisations to run more efficiently and better manage their limited resources (Delshab et al., 2019; O'Reilly & Knight, 2007). Especially in recent years, numerous researchers have devoted their time and attention to investigate this relationship (e.g. Winand & Anagnostopoulos, 2017; Winand, Scheerder, Vos, & Zintz, 2016). For instance, Winand, Scheerder, Vos and Zintz (2016) found that sport federations favour newness and seem driven by demands from members, creating a work atmosphere that favours knowledge creation, knowledge appropriation and innovativeness. Likewise, this research suggested numerous avenues through which sport organisations could improve their KM. These include managers encouraging a positive attitude towards developing new ideas within their organisation, appropriation of different types of knowledge, and exploiting innovative opportunities to meet stakeholder expectations (Winand et al., 2016). Furthermore, Delshab and Sadeghi Boroujerdi (2018) argue that sport organisations should foster a more appropriate context for applying and creating knowledge. Elsewhere, O'Reilly and Knight (2007) found that infrastructure and processes that efficiently facilitate knowledge creation and sharing boost sport organisation performance. The development of individual and social possessions in sport

organisations and their transformation to more efficient resources result from such knowledge creation and sharing cultures (Allameh, Pool, Jaber, & Soveini, 2014). Added to that, “the increased mobility of knowledge workers enables the opening up of more innovation opportunities related to sport” (Ratten, 2017, p. 63). Hence, there is a strong need for sports organisations to apply KM to be competitive and avoid losing critical knowledge sources such as staff, volunteers, or managers (Gholipour Souteh, Esmaeili, Honari, & Ghorbani, 2018).

Beyond understanding the definition and impact of KM, it is essential to have a conceptual framework that helps us define the components of KM and provides a starting point to map KM in the Botswana sport context. To do so, we use the framework put forth by Sunassee and Sewry (2002). This framework, presented in Figure 1, integrates cultural, human and technological components and proposes three main interlinked components: knowledge management of the organisation, of the people, and of infrastructure and processes. The emphasis here is on the importance of aligning the organisation’s knowledge management strategy and culture while also being mindful of the role of infrastructure, technology, and business processes. Firstly, knowledge management of the organisation deals with the activities that need to be performed within an organisation to support overall knowledge management efforts, such as creating a mission and vision, conducting SWOT analyses, managing the organisational culture and planning KM activities. At the people level, the focus is on managing individual behaviour and expectations. Therefore, it is essential to encourage individual knowledge acquisition, sharing and learning through both culture and policies. Finally, infrastructure and processes consist of managing the technological infrastructure and business processes associated with knowledge management activities.

Though other conceptualisations of KM exist, both in sport (e.g. Delshab et al., 2019) and in general (e.g. Ahmed & Elhag, 2017), the selected framework provides a rigorous yet practical, holistic framework for us to map out KM in Botswana sport. Furthermore, as it was developed and tested in the Southern African region (Sunassee & Sewry, 2003), it may be more culturally relevant to the current analysis. The three categories presented will allow us to analyse and present our results in the coming sections. In other words, we aim to map KM in Botswana sport, identify existing gaps, and propose avenues to address these gaps. Finally, it should be noted that our analysis focuses on the sector as a whole and not any particular organisation. We find this perspective especially relevant as sport organisations share numerous common resources, and cross-sectoral cooperation is needed to achieve overarching goals such as sport participation, athletic success or economic impact. Indeed, many actors in Botswana sport are highly interdependent (Kasale, Winand, & Morrow, 2019); as such, a holistic analysis is required and relevant.

Methodology

Design

We rely on a mix of qualitative data to support our findings. Semi-structured interviews with individuals engaged in Botswana sport allowed us to understand and map KM in Botswana sport. Nine interviews were conducted specifically for this paper. To support data saturation and validity, these main interviews are supported by results

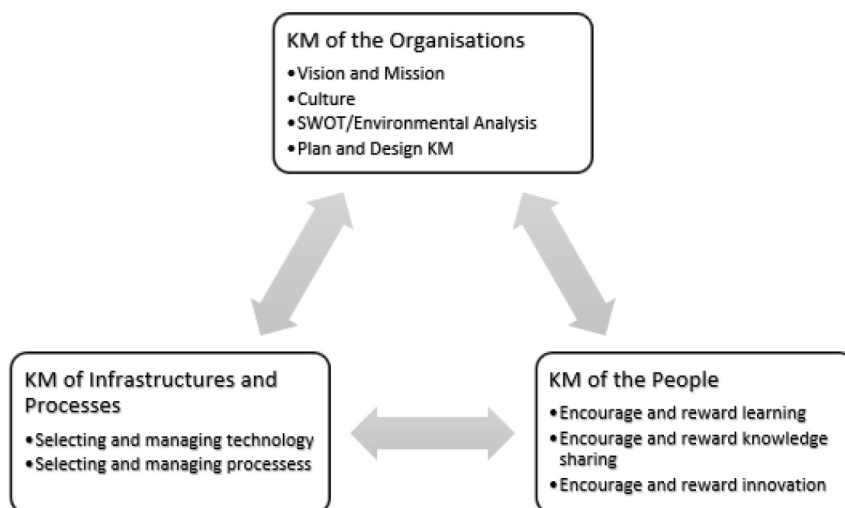


Figure 1. KM Framework adapted from Sunassee and Sewry (2002)

from previous interviews (including from Moustakas, 2020), first-hand experience in the Botswana sport sector, as well as sources such as academic literature, newspaper articles or policy documents.

Earlier interviews are included as previous research questions support the specific goals of this paper. In other words, topics related to KM in Botswana sport emerged in earlier work and strengthened the findings presented here. The interviewee IDs and timelines for all main interviewees are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of main interviewees

ID	Gender	Occupational Area
M01	Male	Politics/Government
M02	Female	Sports
M03	Male	Business
M04	Male	Regional Development
M05	Female	Sports
M06	Female	Business
M07	Male	Research/Academia
M08	Female	Civil Society
M09	Male	Politics/Government

Sampling

A purposive and snowball sampling approach was used to source interviewees. Interviewees were approached by e-mail or Facebook and generated through the first author's professional contacts in Botswana. Additional responses were generated via referrals from these contacts. Ten Individuals were initially contacted, with six agreeing to participate in an interview. Another three individuals were sourced through referrals.

Data collection

The first author conducted semi-structured online interviews in August 2020. In total, nine individuals were interviewed, with interviews lasting between 37 and 67 minutes each. Beforehand,

participants were explained the general purpose of the research and the researcher's interest in the topic. All participants were told that their statements would remain anonymous. The latter was done to allow interviewees to feel comfortable expressing opinions without fear of negative consequences. Interviews took place over online meeting software (Zoom or WebEx) and were digitally recorded subject to interviewee approval. Notes were taken during and after the interviews. Following the literature on this method, interview guidelines were organised around a limited set of predetermined open-ended questions, and probes emerged from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee (Barriball & While, 1994; Bryman, 2012; Diccico-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Turner III, 2010). Specifically, questions moved along three general topics. First, the interviewees were asked about how they viewed the contribution of sport to sustainable development in Botswana. Then, interviewees were asked about ways to improve the sport sector and its contribution to sustainable socio-economic development. Finally, questions specific to the goals of this paper were posed, included as it related to research, data management and technology in the Botswana sport sector. A separate paper has already been written detailing the implications of Botswana sport on sustainable development. This paper, instead, focuses on the realities, gaps and opportunities related to knowledge management in Botswana sport.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim into word processing software. Transcriptions were then analysed using MaxQDA 2020. Transcripts were deductively analysed, coded, and organised against the three knowledge management categories put forth by Sunnassee and Sewry (2002). Throughout the transcripts, memos were also taken to note researcher reflections on the data and its meaning.

Results: Mapping knowledge management in Botswana sport

Organisation level

Various national sport documents show that a certain level of organisational KM is present. Many sport organisations, including the Botswana National Olympic Committee (BNOC), Botswana National Sports Commission (BNSC), or the Botswana Football Association (BFA), have integrated mission statements or SWOT analyses in their strategic plans (Botswana Football Association, 2017; Botswana National Olympic Committee, 2017; Botswana National Sports Council, 2013). Numerous KM tools are readily utilised across the sport sector, including environmental analyses, value gap analysis, and the balanced scorecard approach. However, these critical first steps have not necessarily translated to a broader KM culture within the sector.

Other KM activities do not appear to be planned, designed or implemented. Though sport wishes to raise its profile and commercialise, the sector has not generated the required evidence to justify increased public or private

investment: “Everybody in Botswana sports complains that sport is not considered, and I’m sitting there like, ‘the only way to build a case is to research and provide data’” (M05). One particularly salient example of this lack of knowledge creation comes from the 2014 African Youth Games follow-up. Though a feedback session was held with stakeholders from the sport sector, the session was considered “useless” and just a “tick of the box”. There is a perceived lack of continuity between activities and a lack of appreciation for developing systematic learning and feedback mechanisms. As one interviewee put it, “we don’t measure impact at all” (M08). In turn, this inhibits the measurement of strategic objectives, organisational development and the identification of athletic talent in the country. Still, it is worth keeping in mind that the Botswana sport sector is primarily volunteer-driven, and volunteers often perceive knowledge creation or monitoring activities as a diversion from their organisation’s more critical, day-to-day survival (O’Reilly & Knight, 2007).

Many avenues of knowledge creation and sharing could benefit from simple improvements, yet there appears to be a reluctance to these changes. For instance, communication between different sport organisations is still primarily through mail and courier services, as opposed to e-mail or other collaborative software: “for example, if there’s a course happening, I’ll have to wait for the federation to send me a letter. Instead of being able to, you know, see it on a website or see it on social media” (M05). One interviewee returned to the sport sector hoping to enact changes in these areas, but encountered high resistance: “Even if you try to introduce a new thing it is difficult because people are now used to their way of doing things. People are not necessarily happy with changes” (M08).

Numerous reasons could explain this resistance. There appears to be a certain level of scepticism about technological solutions. For many, these are viewed with suspicion and fear that technological change may render jobs redundant. Furthermore, as O’Reilly and Knight (2007) note, volunteers’ limited time and resources may make individuals more comfortable with one-on-one communication, which is seen as more straightforward than engaging with group, digital or published resources. The lack of role clarity and rivalry between the country’s two major sporting bodies, the BNOC and BNSC, also likely plays a role (Moustakas & Tshube, 2020). The two organisations suffer from a poor, competitive relationship that fosters “power games” (M09) and creates “too much resource guarding, not enough resource sharing” (M03). This myriad of explanations suggests that Botswana sport does not see KM as a priority, and to some extent, may even see KM as a threat as opposed to an added value.

People level

At the people level, KM is equally paradoxical. Sport organisations invest considerable time and resources in learning activities. For instance, the BNOC facilitates the delivery of numerous sport administrator courses, including an Executive Master’s Degree and other smaller courses. In 2018, the Olympic committee contributed nearly 3,2 million BWP to such activities (Botswana National Olympic Committee, 2019). Elsewhere, the BFA is currently engaged in a coach development project in collaboration with the German Olympic Committee. In short, actors in the sport sector place significant value in supporting and encouraging learning amongst individuals in the sector. Nonetheless, for many interviewees, there is a clear sense that more investment needs to be made in both the quantity and quality of learning: “my belief is that we don’t even have the calibre of people who can engage in sport. What do we need to invest a lot in training people that they know how to act” (M06).

Furthermore, amongst stakeholders, information sharing is not necessarily encouraged or rewarded. Many of the factors described previously feed into this. As we will discuss later, part of this issue also lies within Botswana sport’s overall infrastructure and processes. For instance, there is no centralised list or registry accessible to all sport organisations keeping track of crucial resources such as athletes, coaches, referees, equipment or infrastructures. Overall, the reluctance towards change and the competitive relationship between the BNOC and BNSC foster an environment where individuals are not encouraged to share information. During the lead up to the African Youth Games, many stakeholders reported poor communication with the Organising Committee. Most notably, it is clear that sharing is not encouraged at the highest levels of strategic management. The strategic plans of the BNOC and BNSC are aligned to different targets and, most strikingly, put forth differing medal targets for the Olympic Games. In the end, this lack of knowledge sharing leads to a fragmented sport system and a conflicting, inefficient working atmosphere.

Infrastructure and processes

Very few centralised knowledge management infrastructures or processes exist in the Botswana sport sector. Most notably, there is an organisation dedicated to the registration and provision of volunteers for sport. Known as the Sport Volunteer Movement (SVM), this organisation maintains a national database of sport volunteers that organisations can use to source volunteers. The website has been recently updated, and the service’s numbers have grown in recent years (Moustakas, 2020).

Beyond this, there are very few sector-wide approaches in this area. For one, there is a lack of public-facing platforms to serve individual organisations and sport as a whole. Many federations do not have up-to-date websites or have a limited social media presence. And there is no platform for knowledge sharing with the public or between sectoral stakeholders: “web sites are not updated, email blasts are not done” (M04). That means that opportunities that are of interest for the entire sport sector, such as administrator courses, grants or events, are limited to well-informed individuals or those living in urban centres. Providing such information in a public fashion would be of great value. It would help attract individuals to different events and support arguments about the opportunities and value that can be generated through sport. In particular, numerous interviewees recognised the value of not only having a central platform but of more actively and regularly engaging individuals via social media: “Social media is such a powerful tool (...) every second person in the country is on Facebook” (M01).

Of course, such a centralised, public resource can only happen with adequate knowledge sharing processes and infrastructure within or between organisations. At the moment, these are equally lacklustre. Data is collected, analysed and shared in relatively old, ineffective ways. Communications between organisations are still often done by traditional mail, whereas the tracking of athletes, coaches or leagues still rely on handwritten materials or spreadsheets. These methods inhibit data preservation or collection and prevent the country from getting a consistent picture across numerous vital metrics, such as athletes’ demographics, qualified coaches, athletic performance, or economic impact. As noted above, the sector has high sporting and economic ambitions. Yet, current KM processes do not fully reflect that: “We’re trying to compete [with top nations], but we’re still not able to do the basics of performance analysis” (M05).

Discussion: advancing knowledge management in Botswana sport

As the preceding sections show, KM in Botswana sport is a mixed bag with significant room for improvement. There appear to be positive trends in creating internal strategic knowledge and encouraging individual learning. Conversely, individual and sectoral knowledge sharing is not widely supported, with organisational cultures and the lack of adequate technological infrastructure acting as barriers.

Moving forward, our results have numerous important practical implications for the sector in Botswana and elsewhere. First and foremost, there is a pressing need to communicate better the need and value of KM. In that sense, we echo the conclusions of numerous authors who also note that volunteers or staff may have reservations about sharing knowledge (Delshab et al., 2019; O’Reilly & Knight, 2007). As such, leaders in the sector must present the potential benefits of improved KM in concrete, understandable ways. In particular, there may be a fear that sharing or technology could put jobs at risk. Though we can not dismiss this out of hand, improved KM is likely to enhance the sector’s economic and social potential, leading to increased long-term employment.

Parallel to this buy-in, there is a need to select and implement relevant technological infrastructure and processes to improve KM. The sport sector in Botswana shares numerous common inputs and resources. Athletes, coaches, equipment and facilities all interact with multiple sport organisations. Yet, there is no sector-wide tracking and monitoring of these different resources. Despite some attempts to create sector-wide data sharing, the chosen software, Zeus, is perceived as complex and not user friendly. Nonetheless, there is a clear need to move in this direction. Otherwise, it will remain impossible for the sector to monitor its progress, track strategic objectives, and make its case to the public or private sectors.

Furthermore, such a centralised resource could allow organisations to share other materials, such as strategic plans, competition formats or other best practices. In addition, this could feed into a public-facing website that disseminates various sport-related opportunities from across the sector. At present, information and access to events or courses remain restricted to individuals with connections to the sector. Such central, public-facing platforms have been successfully implemented in other countries, including Estonia (see Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information, 2021). Also, social media must be used more consistently to support this public dissemination. Finally, we note that the Covid-19 pandemic has forced many organisations to employ online learning tools, which has increased the attendance and accessibility of courses. As one interviewee who hosted an online event noted, she was able to attract “2000 people to watch the discussion”, whereas, when doing physical events, she only has “between 60 and 100 people” (M06). This is a trend the sector should embrace and invest in further, even post-Pandemic.

In the end, the above recommendations may remain moot if the endemic rivalry between the BNOC and BNSC persists. There has long been a narrative that the two organisations have been at odds. Former BNSC Chairperson Solly Reikeletseng once characterised the organisations as involved in a “territorial turf war” (Botswana Guardian, 2019). The tensions between the two organisations have also been formally recognised, including back in the 2001

National Policy on Sport (Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, 2001) and the 2017-2020 BNOC Strategic Plan (Botswana National Olympic Committee, 2017). Though not the focus of this research, this topic regularly emerged in our interviews. Interviewees pointed to high organisational protectionism levels that led to overlap, competition and obstruction within various sport policy and programmes. This situation directly affects other organisations in the sport sector, as roles and communication channels remain unclear, and these organisations must often navigate politically delicate situations. There have been recent efforts to clarify roles and harmonise relations between the organisations, but these measures appear to have been ineffective. More drastic steps, including a merger, should be considered. Unless this issue is entirely and finally addressed, sustainable improvement of knowledge management in the sector will remain elusive, if not impossible.

Conclusion

With this paper, we aimed to provide an initial mapping of the current Knowledge Management practices in the Botswana sport sector as well as identify specific potential avenues for improvement. In turn, this mapping and related suggestions can support the growth of the sport sector and help boost its socio-economic contribution,

Overall, we see that KM in Botswana sport is present at the individual, organisational level. Organisations engage with several strategic knowledge management tools and encourage individual learning. In contrast, numerous obstacles and inefficiencies exist in creating and sharing knowledge at the sectoral level. Yet, there is a clear need to think and act at a sectoral level. Numerous interdependencies within Botswana sport and sport organisations share numerous vital resources, including athletes, coaches and infrastructure.

To support the growth of KM in the sector, numerous concrete recommendations are presented. In particular, we highlight a need to communicate the value of KM better and obtain the necessary buy-in. Furthermore, we emphasise the need to resolve the endemic tensions between the BNOC and BNSC, which act as a severe inhibitor to KM and overall sectoral growth.

Competing interests

The author(s) have no competing interests to declare.

References

- Ahmed, A., & Elhag, M. (2017). SMART KM model. *World Journal of Science, Technology and Sustainable Development*, 14(2/3), 172–193. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WJSTSD-01-2017-0001>
- Alavi, M., & Leidner, D. E. (2001). Review: Knowledge Management and Knowledge Management Systems: Conceptual Foundations and Research Issues. *MIS Quarterly*, 25(1), 107. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3250961>
- Allameh, S., Pool, J., Jaber, A. [A.], & Soveini, F. (2014). Developing a model for examining the effect of tacit and explicit knowledge sharing on organizational performance based on EFQM approach. *Journal of Science and Technology Policy Management*, 5(3), 265–280.
- Barriball, K. L., & While, A. (1994). Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 19, 328–335.
- Botswana Football Association (2017). *STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 – 2020*. Gaborone.
- Botswana Guardian (2019). Legacy interrupted: Reikeletseng reflects. Retrieved from <http://www.botswanaguardian.co.bw/sports/item/3980-legacy-interrupted-reikeletseng-reflects.html>
- Botswana National Olympic Committee (2017). *BNOC Strategic Plan 2017–2020*. Gaborone.
- Botswana National Olympic Committee (2019). *Annual Financial Statements for the Year Ending 31 December 2018*. Gaborone.
- Botswana National Sports Council (2013). *Strategy Vision 2028*. Gaborone.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4. ed.). Oxford u.a: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Delshab, V., & Sadeghi Boroujerdi, S. (2018). Investigating the influence of unlearning on knowledge management in sport organizations. *Kybernetes*, 47(10), 2025–2040. <https://doi.org/10.1108/K-11-2017-0449>
- Delshab, V., Winand, M., Sadeghi Boroujerdi, S., Pyun, D. Y., & Mahmoudian, A. (2019). Analyzing the influence of employee values on knowledge management in sport organizations. *Journal of Science and Technology Policy Management*, 10(3), 667–685. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTPM-04-2018-0039>

- Dicicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314–321.
- Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information (2021). Estonian Sports Register. Retrieved from <https://www.spordiregister.ee/en/main>
- Gholipour Souteh, R., Esmaeili, M. R., Honari, H., & Ghorbani, M. H. (2018). The Factors affecting Knowledge Sharing at the Iranian Ministry of Sports. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*, 6(1), 87–94. <https://doi.org/10.29252/aassjournal.6.1.87>
- Girard, J. [John], & Girard, J. [JoAnn] (2015). Defining knowledge management: Toward an applied compendium. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, 3(1).
- Girginov, V., Toohey, K., & Willem, A. (2015). Creating and leveraging knowledge to promote sport participation: the role of public governing bodies of sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 15(5), 555–578. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2015.1054409>
- Jefferis, K. (2009). The role of TNCs in the extractive industry of Botswana. *Transnational Corporations*, 18(1).
- Kasale, L. L., Winand, M., & Morrow, S. (2019). A stakeholder approach to performance management in Botswana National Sport Organisations. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 24(4), 226–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2019.1612269>
- Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture (2001). *National Sport and Recreation Policy for Botswana*. Gaborone.
- Mohsen Allameh, S., Khazaei Pool, J., Jaber, A. [Akbar], & Mazloomi Soveini, F. (2014). Developing a model for examining the effect of tacit and explicit knowledge sharing on organizational performance based on EFQM approach. *Journal of Science and Technology Policy Management*, 5(3), 265–280. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTPM-05-2014-0025>
- Moustakas, L. (2018). Botswana. In K. Hallmann & S. Fairley (Eds.), *Sports Volunteers Around the Globe* (pp. 33–42). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Moustakas, L. (2020). Big games in small places: the African Youth Games and organisational capacity in Botswana sport federations. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 8(2), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2020.1849341>
- Moustakas, L., & Işık, A. A. (2020). Sport and sustainable development in Botswana: towards policy coherence. *Discover Sustainability*, 1(1), 793. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-020-00005-8>
- Moustakas, L., & Tshube, T. (2020). Sport policy in Botswana. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 12(4), 731–745. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2020.1832556>
- O'Reilly, N. J., & Knight, P. (2007). Knowledge management best practices in national sport organisations. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 2(3), 264. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2007.012405>
- Ratten, V. (2017). *Sports Innovation Management* (1st). London: Routledge.
- Sunassee, N., & Sewry, D. (2002). A Theoretical Framework for Knowledge Management Implementation. In P. Kotzé, L. Venter, & J. Barrow (Eds.), *ACM international conference proceedings series, Enablement through technology: Proceedings of SAICSIT 2002 Annual Research Conference of the South African Institute of Computer Scientists and Information Technologists : 16-18 September 2002, Port Elizabeth, South Africa* (1st ed., pp. 236–245). Pretoria, South Africa: SAICSIT.
- Sunassee, N., & Sewry, D. (2003). An Investigation of Knowledge Management Implementation Strategies. In J. H. P. Eloff (Ed.), *ACM international conference proceedings series. IT research in developing countries: Proceedings of SAICSIT 2003, Annual Research Conference of the South African Institute of Computer Scientists and Information Technologists : 17-19 September 2003, Fourways, South Africa* (1st ed., pp. 24–36). Pretoria, South Africa: SAICSIT.
- Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 754–760.
- Winand, M., & Anagnostopoulos, C. (2017). Get ready to innovate! Staff's disposition to implement service innovation in non-profit sport organisations. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9(4), 579–595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1308418>
- Winand, M., Scheerder, J., Vos, S., & Zintz, T. (2016). Do non-profit sport organisations innovate? Types and preferences of service innovation within regional sport federations. *Innovation*, 18(3), 289–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14479338.2016.1235985>



Football Fans' Views on the Passolig E-Ticket System and the Decrease in Stadium Attendance: The Case of the Turkish Football Super League

Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

Gökhan Çakmak^{*1A-E} , Sevda Çiftçi^{2A-C} 

¹Kocaeli University, Sport Sciences Faculty, Kocaeli, Turkey

²Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, Sport Sciences Faculty, Turkey

Received: 12.10.2020

Accepted: 05.08.2021

***Correspondence:** Gökhan Çakmak, Kocaeli University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Umutepe Campus, Kocaeli, Turkey, E-mail: cakmakgokhan23@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the reasons behind the decline in stadium attendance in the Turkish Football Super League since the implementation of the Passolig e-ticket system as well as football fans' views on this system. The research sample consisted of football fans living in the province of Sakarya. The total number of participants was 500. A questionnaire comprising three parts was used for data collection. The first part of the questionnaire included questions aimed at identifying personal details of the participants; the second part included questions intended to identify their viewpoints on Passolig; the third part asked about their opinions concerning the reasons behind the decline in stadium attendance. The questionnaire contained 38 questions in total, 37 of which were prepared in the form of a five-point Likert scale with an additional open-ended question to identify participants' opinions of Passolig. Quantitative data obtained through the study were evaluated using the IBM SPSS 25.0 software package, and qualitative analysis methods were employed for coding the questions about participants' opinions. The study concluded that based on the opinions of the participants, Passolig has not been able to fulfill its intended functions of increasing stadium attendance, minimizing violence, and preventing ticket touting. The participants view Passolig as a means of generating unearned income and understand its implementation as one of the main reasons for the decline in stadium attendance. Besides the implementation of Passolig, high ticket prices, the weak financial situation of fans, and media broadcasts that provoke violence were among the foremost reported reasons for the decline in stadium attendance.

Key words: Football, fan, Turkish Football Super League, e-ticket, Passolig

Introduction

Football is a sport dating back to very old times. It is possible to find information in several sources that there were games under various names in several societies in the past that looked like football. However, modern football first occurred in 18th-century Britain. At first, the sport was played with an amateur spirit by ordinary people. However, it has since been affected by the industrialization process and the development and improvement of societies. According to Huizinga (2015), a more serious game concept of football arose in the late 19th century, when the rules were clarified and enriched.

Along with the industrialization of football, old football grounds have been left behind and larger stadiums have been constructed to give more people the opportunity to watch games. As football became industrialized and developed over time, it also became a line of business (Aksar, 2005). Football now draws crowds and vast audiences all over the world.

Football games create an environment in which either desirable or undesirable incidents occur. This happens particularly because of the loss of individuality within crowded groups and various influences. A fan who considers themselves successful because of the success the team they support achieves, who regards any adverse situation a reproach to their team, and who loves the team unconditionally does not exhibit the same behavior patterns in the event of failure. The behaviors of fans following a defeat can include unpleasant cheering, nasty words, and even offenses towards players and directors. These behaviors can be observed across Turkey (Dever, 2010). Moreover, violence in stadiums takes place in Turkey and in various parts of the world.

Fights and stampedes have occurred from time to time in tribunes where crowded groups of fans are all together. Some of these incidents have led to disasters resulting in the deaths of many people. The number of such incidents in stadiums has risen over time, and governments in various countries have had to take several legal measures as a result. Some of the more notable measures have included efforts to ban football, the imposition of severe penalties on those who display disorderly behavior, and the use of several cards to more easily track people who get into the tribunes.

In Italy, football is often associated with a violent and risky environment because of hooliganism. The Tessera del Tifoso loyalty card, which came into force in Italy in 2008, is a card containing the identity and criminal records of fans and is mandatory for season ticket holders and away-game spectators. This card, which was intended to increase stadium participation, did not fulfill its purpose (Di Domizio & Caruso, 2014). In addition, the Football Fan Identity System is an example similar to Passolig. While Margaret Thatcher initially could not implement this system due to objections concerning personal rights violations, it was later put into practice following the Heysel disaster (Irak, 2013).

The number of incidents in the tribunes increased from the 2000s onwards in Turkey (Gunar & Cerrahoglu, 2018). It was largely accepted by the public that existing laws were not sufficient to prevent these incidents. As a result, the need for new measures was mentioned. Following these developments, Law No. 6222 on Prevention of Violence and Disorder in Sports was published in the Official Gazette on 14 April 2011 and entered into force (Official Gazette, 2017). With this law, severe penalties were set forth for those involved in violent acts. In addition, individuals who wish to watch football matches in the tribune are obliged to have an electronic card issued for them. Upon the introduction of this obligation, the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) signed a contract with a private bank by virtue of tender made for the design, supply, and integration of an e-ticket system in the stadiums of football clubs in the Super League, the top football league across the country, and in the First League, the league in the level immediately below the Super League.

The private bank termed the e-ticket card and system “Passolig.” This system, which is mandatorily applied in the Super League, the top football league in Turkey, and in the First League, the league in the level immediately below the Super League, allows every football spectator to get tickets for football games provided that they register with the Passolig system, get a card with their Turkish Republic identity number and photograph affixed to it, and pay the annual fee for the card. Those who do not have this card are not allowed into football matches. Spectators who want to watch football matches in stadiums are required to purchase tickets electronically through this system and link the tickets to the Passolig card.

The implementation of Passolig in the Turkish Football Super League starting in 2014 has caused a number of changes in the habits of fans regarding matches. It has led to situations where those who do not have Passolig cards cannot go to matches. In addition, the fact that paper tickets have been replaced by electronic cards has affected the consumer behaviors of many fans. It has been shown to be among the main reasons for the decline in stadium attendance, leading to discussions about whether this system, which was designed for safety reasons, adversely affects football spectators.

During the seasons following the implementation of Passolig, a noticeable decline in the number of people going to tribunes to watch football matches was observed compared to seasons before Passolig entered into effect. Despite the fact that the level of decline has been lower in recent years because, for example, fans cannot stay away from their teams and do not want to miss any matches, there is still a group of people among the fans who watch matches in the tribune but are against Passolig. Moreover, it is a matter of debate as to whether the aims of the system have been realized through the individualization of penalties, revoking of penalties for banning stadiums or blocks, imposition of deterrent penalties, and prevention of black-market ticket touting.

At this point, it would be meaningful to include statistics on stadium attendance numbers. For example, the league average stadium attendance in the 2013–2014 season was 12,131 people. Stadium attendance decreased by an average of 34.1% in the 2014–2015 season compared to the previous season and amounted to 7,989 people. Although stadium attendance increased by 5.5% in the 2015–2016 season compared to the previous season, it was still behind the pre-Passolig seasons. In the 2016–2017 season, stadium attendance increased by 22% compared to the previous season and amounted to 10,313 people. However, it was still behind the pre-Passolig seasons (European Football Statistics, 2021).

The fact that fans are regarded as customers in Turkish leagues has become much clearer after TFF put Passolig into effect. Although a significant decline has occurred in stadium attendance at the matches following the implementation of Passolig, the football federation continues to take a firm stand on retaining the system (Talimciler, 2015). This study is of importance for all of these reasons; it investigates why stadium attendance in the Turkish Football Super League is low compared to the periods before the implementation of Passolig and reveals football fans' opinions of Passolig.

Methods

Population and sample

The population of the study comprised of fans of the teams in the Super League and First League where Passolig system in 2016–2017 football season is applied. It is not possible to make a precise determination of the number of fans supporting the 36 teams in these leagues. The sample of the study consisted of 500 people who live Sakarya province and reported being fans of a Super League club or who did not support any teams but had knowledge of football and Passolig. The convenience sampling model was used.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was determined as 0.851. This value was found to be adequate, and the respective group was found to be suitable for analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2018).

Data collection tool

A questionnaire consisting of 38 questions in three parts was used as a data collection tool. The questionnaire included questions about the personal information of the participants in the first part, their opinions on Passolig in the second part, and their opinions on the decline in stadium attendance in the third part.

The first part of the data collection tool included seven questions aimed at identifying general information about the participants. In the second part of the data collection tool, there were five questions aimed at determining participants' opinions of Passolig using a five-point Likert scale. The aims of Passolig that had been shared with the public were used when selecting these questions with the intention of revealing participants' opinions on whether these targets were achieved. This part also contained an open-ended question aimed at revealing participants' opinions of the Passolig system. There were 25 questions in the third part of the data collection tool designed by Ozgen (2015). These questions used a five-point Likert scale to determine the opinions of the participants on the reasons for the decline in stadium attendance in the Super League. Some of these questions were used by the researchers upon an update.

Obtaining and analyzing data

Data were collected during the 2016–2017 football season. The questionnaire designed as the measurement tool was presented in a way that made it possible to record the opinions of football spectators both through feedback by hand and via the internet. The questionnaire was announced on the social media accounts of fan groups active in Sakarya province in order to reach their members and the social media accounts of groups interested in football. An IP restriction was applied to prevent individuals from completing the questionnaire multiple times. 382 participants were reached via the internet. A total of 500 participants were reached.

The obtained quantitative data were computerized and analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 software package. Data obtained through quantitative and qualitative analysis were presented in tables and interpreted.

Validity and reliability

The questionnaire was first conducted with 150 people for reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was found to be 0.83. Alpar (2010) states that the reliability of a scale or test with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80–1.00 is high. According to this information, the questionnaire has a high level of reliability.

Table 1. Personal information of the participants

Personal Information	Sub-Groups	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	74	14.8
	Male	426	85.2
Occupation	Football player	10	2.0
	Student	279	55.8
	Academician	16	3.2
	Other	195	39.0
Age	18–24	266	53.2
	25–31	145	29.0
	32–38	62	12.4
	39 and older	27	5.4
Educational Status	Secondary Education	35	7.0
	Associate Degree	33	6.6
	Undergraduate	359	71.8
	Graduate	73	14.6
Frequency of Watching Matches at the Stadium (During One Season)	0	131	26.2
	1–3	134	26.8
	4–8	77	15.4
	9–12	33	6.6
	13 and more	125	25.0
Subscription to Broadcasting Company	Yes	162	32.4
	No	338	67.6
Supported Team	Besiktas	189	37.8
	Fenerbahce	77	15.4
	Galatasaray	123	24.6
	Trabzonspor	55	11.0
	Other	56	11.2

Results

Table 2 shows that the opinions of the participants about Passolig are generally negative. A total of 82.8% of the participants stated that Passolig did not increase stadium attendance in the tribunes, while 58.6% stated that Passolig did not minimize impositions of penalties related to tribunes.

Table 2. Numerical and percentage distribution of participants' answers to the questions on their viewpoints about Passolig

Questions	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1 Passolig minimizes the acts of violence that occur in the stadium tribunes.	269	53.8	88	17.6	71	14.2	44	8.8	28	5.6	Mean: 1.95	SD: 1.240
2 Passolig minimizes the imposition of penalties related to tribunes (banning stadium, block, etc.).	293	58.6	98	19.6	52	10.4	35	7.0	22	4.4	Mean: 1.79	SD: 1.151
3 Passolig prevents fans who are prone to violence from entering stadiums.	243	48.6	99	19.8	81	16.2	46	9.2	31	6.2	Mean: 2.05	SD: 1.1255
4 Passolig increases stadium attendance in the tribunes.	414	82.8	42	8.4	23	4.6	9	1.8	12	2.4	Mean: 1.33	SD: .842
5 Passolig has made purchasing a ticket for a match easier.	212	42.4	63	12.6	86	17.2	62	12.4	77	15.6	Mean: 2.46	SD: 1.508

Table 3. Numerical and percentage distribution of participants' answers to the questions on the reasons for the decline in stadium attendance

Questions	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1 The acts of violence in the tribunes.	178	35.6	114	22.8	111	22.2	56	11.2	41	8.2	Mean: 2.34	SD: 1.286
2 Poor football quality.	64	12.8	44	8.8	131	26.2	123	24.6	138	27.6	Mean: 3.45	SD: 1.322
3 Passolig system.	37	7.4	39	7.8	71	14.2	105	21.0	248	49.6	Mean: 3.98	SD: 1.272
4 Inconsistency of match schedules.	108	21.6	119	23.8	148	29.6	72	14.4	53	10.6	Mean: 2.69	SD: 1.255
5 Convenience of following matches using communication instruments.	109	21.8	97	19.4	149	29.8	97	19.4	48	9.6	Mean: 2.76	SD: 1.260
6 Poor conditions at the stadiums.	121	24.2	118	23.6	127	25.4	94	18.8	40	8.0	Mean: 2.63	SD: 1.256
7 The fact that the team is often given the penalty of playing without spectators.	161	32.2	135	27.0	106	21.2	53	10.6	45	9.0	Mean: 2.37	SD: 1.278
8 High ticket prices.	25	5.0	38	7.6	83	16.6	134	26.8	240	44.0	Mean: 3.97	SD: 1.167
9 A negative response to the policies of TFF.	44	8.8	64	12.8	110	22.0	117	23.4	165	33.0	Mean: 3.59	SD: 1.300

10	A negative response of the fans to their teams.	89	17.8	108	21.6	149	29.8	81	16.2	73	14.6	Mean: 2.88 SD: 1.290
11	Nasty cheering in the tribunes.	215	43.0	123	24.6	88	17.6	39	7.8	35	7.0	Mean: 2.11 SD: 1.240
12	The fact that gymnasiums are more attractive.	271	54.2	124	24.8	67	13.4	21	4.2	17	3.4	Mean: 1.78 SD: 1.050
13	Clubs cannot create a sense of belonging among their fans.	142	28.4	100	20.0	124	24.8	75	15.0	59	11.8	Mean: 2.62 SD: 1.347
14	Football is becoming increasingly boring.	174	34.8	89	17.8	106	21.2	69	13.8	62	12.4	Mean: 2.51 SD: 1.403
15	Weak financial situation of the fans.	47	9.4	63	12.6	91	18.2	148	29.6	151	30.2	Mean: 3.59 SD: 1.291
16	Lack of football players to excite the fans.	124	24.8	101	20.2	126	25.2	77	15.4	72	14.4	Mean: 2.74 SD: 1.365
17	Inadequacy of promotional activities for the league.	161	32.2	109	21.8	109	21.8	66	13.2	55	11.0	Mean: 2.49 SD: 1.350
18	Entry into force of laws on violence in football.	160	32.0	118	23.6	97	19.4	59	11.8	66	13.2	Mean: 2.51 SD: 1.386
19	Failure to make Passolig widespread.	261	52.2	66	13.2	71	14.2	51	10.2	51	10.2	Mean: 2.13 SD: 1.406
20	Lack of a well-established football culture.	151	30.2	84	16.8	100	20.0	88	17.6	77	15.4	Mean: 2.71 SD: 1.445
21	Tense atmosphere created by the coaches and players on the pitch.	177	35.4	129	25.8	100	20.0	58	11.6	36	7.2	Mean: 2.29 SD: 1.258
22	The perception that referees administer matches in a biased manner.	75	15.0	72	14.4	119	23.8	98	19.6	136	27.2	Mean: 3.30 SD: 1.394
23	Lack of management in football clubs.	46	9.2	48	9.6	131	26.2	132	26.4	143	28.6	Mean: 3.56 SD: 1.251
24	Media broadcasts that provoke violence among fans.	75	15.0	80	16.0	127	25.4	85	17.0	133	26.6	Mean: 3.24 SD: 1.393
25	Lack of policies aimed at making football widespread.	84	16.8	77	15.4	110	22.0	108	21.6	121	24.2	Mean: 3.21 SD: 1.404

When the table is examined, it can be seen that the participants agreed to a large extent with the statement that Passolig is a major reason for the decline in stadium attendance in the tribunes. Most of the participants did not agree with the statement that the reason for the decline in stadium attendance in the tribunes is the failure to make Passolig widespread.

Furthermore, most of the participants agreed that in addition to Passolig, high ticket prices, the weak financial situation of fans, and poor-quality football were reasons behind the decline in stadium attendance.

An examination of participants' opinions of Passolig shows that the majority believe Passolig is unnecessary and should be abolished, while the least preferred statement was that Passolig is insecure. The opinions of the participants about Passolig can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Numerical distributions of participants' opinions of Passolig

	Keyword	f
1	Unnecessary, should be abolished	297
2	A means of getting unearned income	119
3	The reason for the decline in stadium attendance	104
4	Cannot achieve its goals, non-functional	93
5	Inadequate, should be improved	65
6	Good and necessary	62
7	Malicious	58
8	Tagging	34
9	Practical	33
10	Means of touting	25
11	Insecure	20

Discussion

Participants' answers to the questions offer an answer as to whether Passolig has been able to fulfill its aims.

According to the information on the official Passolig website, "Passolig card ensures that fans can go to stadiums with their beloved ones securely and watch any games they want in peace and away from any unfavorable situations" (Passolig, 2017). However, 53.8% of the football fans who participated in the study stated that they strongly disagreed with the statement in the data collection tool that "Passolig minimizes acts of violence in the tribunes," and only 17.6% disagreed with the same statement. In other words, football fans who participated in the research are of the opinion that the statement "it will minimize acts of violence," which is one of the benefits expected to be provided by Passolig, is not true and thus Passolig has not achieved its goal. Likewise, Mizrahi (2016), Baykara (2017), and Addesa and Delice (2019) concluded in their studies that the "Passolig application did not minimize acts of violence."

One of the main purposes of the Passolig card is to recognize an individual as they enter the stadium and impose penal sanctions by detecting spectators via their seat numbers (Güney, 2015). The football fans who participated in the study stated that they disagreed with the statement "Passolig minimizes impositions of penalties regarding tribunes (banning stadium, block, etc.)," with 58.6% reporting that they strongly disagreed with the statement and 19.6% reporting that they disagreed with the statement. It is possible to say based on these data that football fans who participated in the research did not agree with this statement. Penalties imposed by TFF for banning tribunes or blocks and playing without spectators support the opinions of the football fans who participated in the study. This hinders fans who are not involved in any actions that require penal sanctions but whose seats are located in the blocked part of the stadium from entering the next match. This can cause the unjust suffering of fans, particularly those who possess a combined card. The fact that TFF blocked the cards of those seated in some parts of the tribunes due to unpleasant and nasty cheering during the match between Sivasspor and Adana Demirspor on 24 December 2016 and that a fan of Sivasspor who was deaf and dumb since birth was penalized because of unpleasant and nasty cheering (Fotomaç, 2017) supports the opinions of the football fans who took part in the study. The fact that the same fan was penalized once again for the same reason (unpleasant and nasty cheering) during the league match between Yeni Malatyaspor and Sivasspor on 7 December 2019 (T24, 2019) and that the penalty was revoked when news of the incident spread on social media proves that no steps for improvement were taken. Hatipoğlu Aydın and Aydın (2019) state that it is a rudimentary solution to ban fans from watching matches despite the presence of security cameras and staff assigned to prevent violence and disorder.

When the answers to the open-ended question aimed at identifying participants' opinions of Passolig are examined, it is possible to state that participants mostly had negative opinions about Passolig. The idea that Passolig should be abolished was expressed by the participants 297 times. Similarly, the opinion that Passolig did not achieve its goals and was non-functional was expressed by the participants 93 times. The correspondence between

participants' answers to the questions included in the second part of the questionnaire and their opinions about Passolig strengthens the results.

Another situation that causes suffering for football fans is touting, which refers to the sale of sold-out tickets under the table for very high prices. The prevention of touting is another benefit promised through the implementation of Passolig. However, touting, which was previously done under the table, was made apparent upon the initiation of Passolig under the name of "ticket transfer" through social media and several websites. It is possible to transfer tickets without question via the Passolig system to another person who holds a Passolig card. This process is described under "Frequently Asked Questions" on the website (Passolig, 2017). Football fans who participated in the study stated 25 times that this application is a means of touting.

The fact that Passolig has a clear effect on the decline in stadium attendance in the tribunes is accepted by the vast majority of Turkish society. Regarding the questions on the decline in stadium attendance in the tribunes, most of the participants agreed with the answer "Passolig application" that is included in the data collection tool. A total of 49.6% of the participants stated that they strongly agreed with this statement, while 21% reported that they agreed with the statement. The arithmetic average of answers to this statement was found to be $\bar{x} = 3.98$. With regard to the reasons for the decline in stadium attendance, 52.2% of the football fans participating in the study stated that they strongly disagreed with the statement "Failure to make Passolig widespread." The arithmetic average for this statement was found to be $\bar{x} = 2.13$. According to these data, it is possible to assert that football fans who participated in the study consider Passolig to be the main reason for the decline in stadium attendance in the tribunes. When the current number of Passolig cards given on the official website for Passolig is examined, it can be seen that the number of Passolig card holders is quite considerable. Since 14 April 2014, the Passolig card has been used instead of paper tickets. Fans who do not have a Passolig card are not allowed to watch Super League and First League matches at the stadiums. Payment of a certain fee is required to have a card and renew it every year. The fact that 5,554,670 people have a Passolig card (Passolig, 2020) leads to the perception that Passolig is a system established for the purpose of making a profit. Apart from its financial dimension, the system is criticized by those who are against it because it requires every person 7 years old and older who wants to watch a match at a stadium to share personal details with a private bank. Examination of the participants' opinions about Passolig shows the correspondence of these issues to the issues mentioned above. The participants stated 297 times that this system should be abrogated, 119 times that this system is a means of unearned income, and 58 times that it is malicious.

Difficult living conditions in Turkey may be considered as another reason for the decline in stadium attendance in the tribunes. A total of 44% of football fans who participated in the study stated that they strongly agreed that high ticket prices were one of the reasons for the decline in stadium attendance, and 26.8% stated that they agreed with this statement. The arithmetic average of answers to this statement was found to be $\bar{x} = 3.97$. A total of 30.2% of the participants strongly agreed and 29.6% agreed that the weak financial situation of fans was one of the reasons for the decline in stadium attendance, which also confirms that ticket prices are high. The arithmetic average for this statement is $\bar{x} = 3.59$. In light of these data, it is possible to state that the football fans who participated in the study see high ticket prices and the weak financial situation of fans as reasons for the decline in stadium attendance.

According to the *Sabah* newspaper of 18 November 2014, the weekly average income of a person in Turkey is 284 euros based on IMF data. This amount can be used to buy tickets for 19 Super League matches with an average ticket price of 14.7 euros. This number corresponds to 20 tickets in Spain, 22 tickets in Italy, and 27.3 tickets in Germany (Karakullukçu, 2014).

According to the newspaper called *Fanatik* on 17 January 2018, based on data from the *Daily Mirror* that includes information about average ticket prices in Europe, the highest average ticket price was that of Arsenal (England) with 390 TL. Average ticket prices for other teams were as follows: Real Madrid (Spain), 294.5 TL; Bayern Munich (Germany), 289 TL; Galatasaray (Turkey), 256 TL; Juventus (Italy), 177.5 TL; Basel (Switzerland), 163 TL; Fenerbahçe (Turkey), 159.5 TL; and Besiktas (Turkey), 157.5 TL. The average price is much higher for the matches of major clubs, especially for matches between two major clubs. The purchasing power of the citizens of the abovementioned countries should not be ignored in this context as it makes these prices more meaningful. The situation is still similar today. For example, the average ticket price for Barcelona that attracted the highest number of spectators was 90 euros in the 2018-2019 season, while the average ticket price for the four major clubs in Turkey for the past four seasons was 148.5 TL (Aktifbank, 2019). The effect of ticket prices on stadium participation is obvious (Di Domizio & Caruso, 2014).

The intensity of competition in football is important in terms of stadium attendance (Scelles et al., 2013). A total of 27.6% of the football fans who participated in the study strongly agreed with the statement that poor football quality contributed to the decline in stadium attendance, while 24.6% agreed. The arithmetic average of the answers to this

statement was $\bar{x} = 3.45$. A total of 33% of the participants strongly agreed that a negative response to policies of the TFF contributed to the decline in stadium attendance, and 23.4% agreed with this statement. The arithmetic average of the answers to this statement was $\bar{x} = 3.59$. Finally, 28.6% of the football fans who participated in the study strongly agreed that a lack of management in football clubs was one of the reasons for the decline in stadium attendance, while 26.4% said they agreed with this statement. The arithmetic average of the answers to this statement was $\bar{x} = 3.56$. Based on these data, the football fans who participated in the study consider poor quality football, policies of the TFF, and the lack of management in football clubs reasons for the decline in stadium attendance.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the reasons for the decline in stadium attendance in the Turkish Football Super League and reveal the opinions of football fans about Passolig. The results were based on data obtained from only the fans of teams in the Turkish Football Super League. According to the opinions of the study participants, it was concluded that Passolig did not increase the number of spectators in the tribunes as intended, nor did it minimize penalty impositions regarding tribunes (banning blocks, tribunes, etc.), reduce acts of violence in the tribunes, or end black-market ticket touting. In fact, it made black-market ticket touting easier. Moreover, the general opinion of the participants was in favor of the abrogation of Passolig. It is understood that Passolig is the main reason for the decline in the number of spectators in the tribunes. High ticket prices and the weak financial situation of fans are considered other primary reasons for the decline in stadium attendance.

In light of these conclusions, Passolig, which is regarded as the main reason fans' attendance at stadiums has declined, should either be abolished or its image should be improved by implementing amendments concerning annual fees and the privacy of personal information. The negative perception of the system can only be improved in this way. Considering the financial situation of the fans, regulations should be implemented regarding ticket prices and combined card prices to make them more reasonable.

Ethics approval and informed consent

This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Sakarya University in Turkey (ref. no. 62/26.10.2016). Informed consent to participate was obtained for the study contents, purposes, and protocols; data confidentiality and anonymity procedures and participants' freedom to discontinue the study were explained. This research was produced from the master's thesis of Gökhan Çakmak, which was accepted by Sakarya University Social Sciences Institute in 2018.

Competing interests

There are no conflicts of interest associated with this manuscript, financial or otherwise.

Funding

No financial support has been received for this study.

References

- Addesa, F. & Delice, M. E. (2019). Reform effectiveness and unresolved issues of the football in Turkish Super League. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*, 8(2), 1-7.
- Aksar, T. (2005). *Industrial Football* (1st ed.). İstanbul: Literatür Publishing.
- Aktifbank. (2019). *Ekolig 4 – Report on Football Economy*. İstanbul: Aktifbank.
- Alpar, R. (2010). *Applied Statistics and Validity-Reliability* (1st ed.). Ankara: Detay Publishing.
- Avgın, K. A. (2015). *Yes to Sports No to Violence* (1st ed.). Ankara: Akademisyen Bookstore.
- Baykara, A. (2017). *Evaluation of Electronic Ticket System in Football Matches Based on Opinions of Spectators*. Unpublished master's thesis, Mersin University Institute of Education Sciences, Mersin, Turkey.
- Buyukozturk, S. (2018). *Data Analysis Handbook for Social Sciences Statistics, Research Pattern, SPSS Applications and Interpretation* (24th ed.). Ankara: Pegem Akademi.
- Dever, A. (2010). *Sports Sociology: Sports and Society with Their Historical and Current Dimensions* (1st ed.). İstanbul: Baslık Publications.

- Di Domizio, M. & Caruso, R. (2014). Hooliganism and demand for football in Italy: Attendance and counterviolence policy evaluation. *German Economic Review*, 16(2), 123-137.
- European Football Statistics (n.d). Attendences. Retrieved June 14, 2021, from <http://www.european-football-statistics.co.uk/attn.htm>
- Fanatik. (2018, January 17). En pahalı biletleri hangi kulüp satıyor? [Which club sells the most expensive tickets?]. Retrieved June 9, 2018, from <http://www.fanatik.com.tr/foto-galeri/avrupa-dan-futbol/en-pahali-biletleri-hangi-kulup-satiyor-1343482/14>
- Fotomaç. (2017, January 21). Görülmemiş ceza! [Unprecedented punishment!]. Retrieved May 26, 2017, from <http://www.fotomac.com.tr/birincilig/2017/01/21/gorulmemis-ceza>
- Gunar, B. B. & Cerrahoglu, N. (2018). Turkish football is broken: Electronic ticket application. *COMU Sports Sciences Journal*, 1(1), 46-58.
- Güney, E. (2015). Violence and e-ticket problem in sports: Comparison of Turkey and Italy. *Bulletin of Sports Studies Center*, 18, 3-4.
- Hatipoğlu Aydın, D. & Hatipoğlu, M. B. (2019). Security, market and legalization: A sociological assessment on the Law No 6222. *Mülkiye Journal*, 43(4), 731-758.
- Huizinga, J. (2015). *Homo Ludens* (5th ed.). İstanbul: Ayrıntı Publications.
- Irak, D. (2013). *Hükmen Yenik! Socio-Politics of Football in Turkey and England* (1st ed.). İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayım.
- Karakullukçu, U. (2014, November 18). Taraftarın Cebi Yanıyor [Fan's pocket is on fire]. Retrieved May 28, 2017, from <https://www.sabah.com.tr/spot/futbol/2014/11/18/taraftarin-cebi-yaniyor>
- Mizrahi, H. (2016). *Passolig: A Revolution in Turkish Football or a System of Tagging?* Unpublished master's thesis, İstanbul Bilgi University Institute of Social Sciences, İstanbul, Turkey.
- Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey. (2011). Sporda Şiddet ve Düzensizliğin Önlenmesine Dair Kanun [Law on the Prevention of Violence and Disorder in Sports] Retrieved February 06, 2027, from <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/04/20110414-6.htm>
- Ozgen, C. (2015). *Examination of Reasons for the Decline in the Number of Audience in Turkish Football Super League Based on Opinions of Spectators*. Unpublished master's thesis. Ankara University Institute of Health Sciences, Ankara, Turkey.
- Passolig. (n.d.). Maç Biletimi/Kombinemi Nasıl Transfer Ederim? [How do I transfer my match ticket/combination?]. Retrieved May 26, 2017, from <https://www.passolig.com.tr/mac-biletimi-kombinemi-nasil-transfer-ederim>
- Passolig. (n.d.). Nedir? [what?]. Retrieved April 12, 2017, from <https://www.passolig.com.tr/nedir>
- Passolig. (n.d.). Taraftar Ligi [Fan League]. Retrieved June 10, 2020, from <https://www.passolig.com.tr/taraftar-ligi>
- Scelles, N., Durand, C., Bonnal, L., Goyeau, D., & Andreff, W. (2013). Competitive balance versus competitive intensity before a match: Is one of these two concepts more relevant in explaining attendance? The case of the French Football Ligue 1 over the period 2008-2011. *Applied Economics* 45(29), 4184-4192.
- T24. (2019, December 20). İşitme ve Konuşma Engelli Taraftara 'Küfür Ettin' Cezası [Hearing and speech-impaired fans punished by 'cursing']. Retrieved August 4, 2021, from <https://t24.com.tr/haber/isitme-ve-konusma-engelli-taraftara-kufur-ettin-cezasi,852953>
- Talimciler, A. (2015). *Sociology of Sport, Sport of Sociology* (2nd ed.). İstanbul: Bağlam Publishing.



Physical Activity Using Social Media During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Perceptions of Sports Science Students

Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

Samuel López-Carril^{1,2 A-D} , Paloma Escamilla-Fajardo^{*1A-C} ,
 Mario Alguacil-Jiménez^{1C-E} 

¹Department of Physical Education and Sport, Universitat de València, Spain

²Department of Physical Activity and Sports Science, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo, Spain

Received: 17.10.2020

Accepted: 24.08.2021

***Correspondence:** Paloma Escamilla-Fajardo; Department of Physical Education and Sport, Universitat de València; 3 Gascó Oliag; 46020, Valencia, Spain; email: paloma.escamilla@uv.es

Abstract

During the period of the COVID-19 lockdown, sports organizations and companies had to look for new ways to connect with their customers by offering physical activity (PA) alternatives to do at home. This study explores the perceptions of 175 undergraduate sports science students regarding their social media (SM) and PA patterns during the first Spanish COVID-19 lockdown period (March to May 2020). From their homes, the students completed an ad hoc online questionnaire. The data was analyzed using SPSS 23.0 software to perform descriptive and inferential analysis (t-test). The results show that the participants used SM during the COVID-19 lockdown to visualize or practice PA, perceiving SM platforms as channels through which to motivate themselves to perform PA, promote it or learn about new training disciplines. Significant gender differences were found with respect to the practice of PA using SM, with females showing higher scores than males. YouTube and Instagram were the most used SM platforms for viewing or practicing PA. In terms of practical implications, this study reinforces the role of SM in sports management for creating opportunities to connect with customers and offer innovative PA proposals in the challenging period brought on by COVID-19.

Key words: Social media, COVID-19, lockdown, physical activity, sport

Introduction

In its weekly epidemiological update (25 April 2021), the World Health Organization (WHO) reported more than 146 million cases and over 3 million deaths globally from COVID-19 illness (WHO, 2020a). Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, most countries have been forced to adopt protective policies such as physical distancing and social isolation to combat the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. Among the restrictions that have brought about a remarkable change in many people's daily lives are the cancellation of high participation events and sports leagues, travel restrictions (Stanton et al., 2020), the suspension of social gatherings, and the closure of schools and universities (Parnell et al., 2020). Whether in one form or another, COVID-19 has had a direct socio-economic impact on the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors (Nicola et al., 2020), creating a "new normality" that is directly reshaping the way people interact and a wide range of spheres of life (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Instances of this include changes to work, education, access to information, and consumption of sports goods and services, among other areas.

The field of sport has been no exception. The widespread need to minimize the possibilities of COVID-19 transmission has had an enormous impact on sports and exercise (Yeo, 2020). The consequences of the long-term impact of the virus on sport are still beginning to emerge. We still do not know what sport, in its different expressions (e.g., professional, amateur, and recreational), will be like after the pandemic, although it is likely that the virus will become a regular feature of life in the years to come (Evans et al., 2020). Nevertheless, as a result of the imposition of political physical distance and social isolation measures affecting the entire population, sports clubs and organizations have already paused face-to-face activity, and sports centers and facilities have been closed (Hayes, 2020). Lockdowns have forced competitions and other types of organized sports activities to be cancelled or postponed. These restrictions negatively affect daily sports practice (Hammami et al., 2020), which has implications for health and well-being. Thus, some European countries allowed outdoor exercise during their lockdowns (e.g., Germany and the UK), while other countries, such as Sweden, avoided coercive strict lockdowns precisely because of the health consequences of preventing people from exercising (Wackerhage et al., 2020). These policies towards physical activity (PA) and sport are in line with the opinions of experts who advocated for staying physically active to prevent future health problems (Constandt et al., 2020).

Considering the situation described above, the sports sector has been pushed to explore or strengthen other pathways for citizens to engage in PA. Among them, proposals for PA on social media (SM) have stood out. While the academic literature previously highlighted the important role SM plays in the sports industry (Abeza et al., 2015; Filo et al., 2015), it has been during the COVID-19 lockdown periods that its use in the sporting context has become particularly relevant (e.g., Hayes, 2020). The requirement for citizens to be confined within their homes has led to increased online consumption by the population as well as a large growth in the use of SM (Nabity-Grover et al., 2020). This fact has allowed platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok to become venues where society has been able to view multiple proposals for visualizing or performing PA at home and users have had the opportunity to connect (Hayes, 2020; Su et al., 2020). Trainers, fitness centers, and other types of sports entities have adapted their proposals during confinement to provide alternative services to their customers and attempt to attract new customers (Mutz et al., 2021; Stanford & Salles, 2021).

Given the impact of home-based PA enhanced through SM on the sports industry (Hayes, 2020), this article focuses on the perspectives that a group of Spanish sports science university students have had on this new phenomenon during the lockdown period. As students of sports science, this population group in particular has a predisposition towards PA. This study considers their perceptions of the use of SM to promote PA. The assumption here is that they will be future deliverers of PA proposals to ensure proper physical and mental health. It is therefore important to better understand their perceptions of the potential of SM for channeling PA proposals, as SM platforms will be important tools in their professional future. Therefore, the study has potential implications in the field of health policy development using SM, for the introduction of SM in university courses, and for sports industry professionals who can exploit SM to develop new products and services for PA delivery adapted to the pandemic context.

Lockdown, home-based PA, and SM

According to Ratten (2020), “the sport industry is one of the most affected by the restrictions put in place because of the virus” (p. 1). In the quarantine context, with the population unable to go outside for physical practice, there is a higher risk of sedentary behavior that adversely affects health. As a result, the WHO (2020b) made a range of recommendations for avoiding physical inactivity such as “learn simple daily physical exercises to perform at home, in quarantine or isolation so you can maintain mobility and reduce boredom” (p. 5).

PA at home has received specific attention from several studies that have pointed out its positive impact on the health of practitioners and its ability to assist with recovery or help with overcoming diverse injuries or illnesses (e.g., Coughlin et al., 2019; Flynn et al., 2019; Pekmezi et al., 2017). Considering that there is no possibility of going outside in the lockdown context, home-based PA can be valuable for maintaining an active population and preventing tendencies towards sedentary behavior by promoting the health of the population (Shariat et al., 2020). Therefore, it is recommended that people stay active by doing PA at home (Hammami et al., 2020).

Various types of PA can be done at home. Nevertheless, there is sometimes a lack of motivation to practice PA. This may happen because people are used to doing PA in a social context with other people, and many have never done PA at home before. In this sense, SM, “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61), has boosted the development of PA at home by encouraging populations to practice PA (Hayes, 2020). The reason for this is that during this period of lockdown, the populations of several countries, including Spain, were not allowed to leave their homes to engage in PA. For example, SM promoted online PA

challenges and allowed PA trainers and influencers to support and inspire practitioners, making at-home PA more social in nature (Stanford & Salles, 2021; Su et al., 2020). Therefore, SM allowed a greater practice of PA in the periods of restrictions, helping prevent an increase in sedentary lifestyles caused by the lockdown situation (Mutz et al., 2021; Wackerhage, 2020). The success of SM in promoting PA at home benefited from the general growth of SM use by the population during the lockdown. Indeed, due to the restrictions arising from COVID-19, the frequency of SM use has increased considerably (Nabity-Grover et al., 2020). According to We Are Social (2020), SM usage increased from the pre-lockdown period by 58% in the population aged 16–24, 50% in the 25–34 age group, 42% in the 35–44 age group, 34% in the 45–54 age group, and 32% in the 55–64 age group. Considering this data and the situation of social restrictions, it is understandable that the ways in which organizations or individuals connect with their clients or followers has changed (Ratten, 2020).

SM is used through technological devices such as smartphones and other wearable digital devices that can offer significant productivity opportunities and benefits (Gao & Lee, 2019). These technological devices are elements that inseparably accompany the majority of the population. Therefore, it is also essential to consider these devices that make SM accessible as avenues for accessing the population to encourage them to engage in PA (Barkley et al., 2020). During the periods of confinement caused by the pandemic, professionals offering PA products and services needed new channels to reach their customers. Within this context, “social media and in particular online communities are a way that businesses are connecting with their customers” (Ratten, 2020, p. 5). Nevertheless, the opportunities offered by SM to the sports industry should be taken with caution as excessive smartphone use can have negative health consequences (Elhai et al., 2020). For instance, SM can encourage addictions, sedentary lifestyles, and sleeping and self-esteem disorders and can even facilitate the consumption and propagation of fake news, among other things, as several studies have warned (e.g., Baccarella et al., 2018; Bailin et al., 2014). Therefore, considering these risks, it is important to develop policies and initiatives that educate and guide citizens to use mobile devices and SM responsibly and take advantage of the potential of these tools to catalyze PA proposals that lead to healthier lifestyles.

The relationship between COVID-19 and healthy PA behaviors is something that has quickly caught the attention of researchers who have addressed this issue in recent literature (e.g., Constandt et al., 2020; Goethals et al., 2020; Schnitzer et al., 2020). Despite these valuable studies, specific research exploring young people’s perceptions of the possibilities offered by SM for practicing PA under the COVID-19 lockdown scenario have not yet been carried out. In pursuing this, the perceptions of university students studying sports science were considered a suitable sample. This population group comprises regular consumers of PA who will soon enter the sports industry as PA prescribers. Given this gap in the literature, the main objectives of this work are threefold: first, to identify which SM platforms were the most used by sports science students to visualize PA during the COVID-19 lockdown; second, to identify which SM platforms were the most used by sports science students to perform PA during the COVID-19 lockdown; and third, to explore the sports science students’ perceptions about the relationship between SM and the practice of PA during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Methodology

Context and participants

This study involved undergraduate students ($n = 175$) from the second and third year of the Bachelor’s Degree in PA and Sports Science at the University of Valencia in Spain. Data collection was undertaken by convenience sampling. Since the participants were students at the same university, we had the possibility of connecting with them online during the teaching period of the first Spanish lockdown (from March to May 2020). A total of 76.6% ($n = 134$) of the students were male, and 23.43% ($n = 41$) were female. The mean age of the participants was 21.72 years ($SD = 3.44$), with an age range of 20 to 50 years old. All students participated voluntarily and gave their signed consent so that the data obtained could be used for academic purposes with their anonymity guaranteed. The study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013).

Instrument, procedure, and data analysis

Given the lack of literature on PA using SM during the COVID-19 pandemic, we used LimeSurvey to create a new ad hoc online scale of eight questions assessing the perspectives of the sample regarding the three objectives of our study. The scale is called “Lockdown PA Practice through SM” (LPAPSM). The scale items were developed by the authors to measure diverse perceptions about the relationship between SM and the practice of PA during the COVID-19 lockdown (e.g., “SM facilitates the promotion of PA during lockdown,” “SM is more important in

promoting PA and sports during lockdown than before,” “After the lockdown, I will continue to use SM to follow training proposals.”). The LPAPSM scale was filled in using five Likert-type scale response anchors, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.” Besides the LPAPSM scale, sociodemographic items such as gender, age, and pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 lockdown SM usage patterns were included.

To analyze the psychometric properties of the LPAPSM scale, an exploratory factorial analysis (EFA) was carried out using the software FACTOR, following the recommendations established by Lloret-Segura et al. (2014). The factorial analysis was carried out by means of the maximum likelihood extraction method with quartimin rotation. To determine the number of factors that yield the set of items, a parallel analysis was carried out (Timmerman & Lorenzo-Seva, 2011). To determine the fit of the proposed model, the values of the root mean square of residuals (RMSR) and the gamma index of the goodness-of-fit (GFI) were used, as suggested by Tanaka and Huba (1989). In addition, to ensure the sample fit, it was verified that the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was greater than .50 (KMO = .78), which indicates the degree to which each element is predictable by the others and, therefore, ensures the relationship between them. Furthermore, Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant, which is important for ensuring the elements are sufficiently correlated to carry out this type of analysis (López-Aguado & Gutiérrez-Provecho, 2019).

Regarding the results of the EFA, Table 1 presents the values obtained with respect to the mean, asymmetry, and kurtosis by each of the elements of the scale.

Table 1. Mean, skewness, and kurtosis of the elements that make up the LPAPSM scale

Item	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
My daily use of SM has increased.	4.20	−1.404	1.251
Watching a video of other people doing PA motivates me to train.	3.43	−0.422	−0.623
Sharing my achievements through SM motivates me to keep training.	3.18	−0.162	−1.036
SM can help make new sporting disciplines, training proposals, or exercises visible.	4.39	−1.349	2.131
I have learned about new disciplines, training proposals, or exercises through SM.	3.59	−0.602	−0.548
SM facilitates the promotion of PA during lockdown.	4.61	−1.910	5.128
SM is more important in promoting PA and sports during the lockdown than before.	4.45	−1.472	2.118
After confinement, I will continue to use SM to follow or participate in training proposals.	3.59	−0.599	−0.399

The results of the EFA show that a factor is identified in which the eight items that make up the LPAPSM scale are grouped (see Table 2), with weights ranging from .41 to .66. The adjustment of the proposed model is adequate, since the RMSR value is below .50 (RMSR = .08) and the GFI value is above .95 (GFI = .97). Finally, in terms of scale reliability analysis, Cronbach’s alpha shows a value of .74, which is thus above the recommended value of .70 (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 2. Factorial structure of the LPAPSM scale

Factor 1 LPAPSM	F1	Com.
My daily use of SM has increased.	.43	.18
Watching a video of other people doing PA motivates me to train.	.63	.39
Sharing my achievements through SM motivates me to keep training.	.43	.18
SM can help make new sporting disciplines, training proposals, or exercises visible.	.66	.43
I have learned about new disciplines, training proposals, or exercises through SM.	.62	.39
SM facilitates the promotion of PA during the lockdown.	.48	.23
SM is more important in promoting PA and sports during the lockdown than before.	.41	.17
After confinement, I will continue to use SM to follow or participate in training proposals.	.59	.35

Note: Com = communality; RMSR = .08; GFI = .97.

Concerning the procedure for administering the questionnaire, the participants completed it online from April 6 to April 12, 2020. This time period was within the fourth week of the Spanish lockdown decreed by the Spanish Government on March 14, 2020, which entered into effect on the following day and limited citizen mobility to essential functions. Consequently, students did not return to the classroom and instead finished the academic year online. The statistical package SPSS 23.0 was used to analyze the data obtained as part of the quantitative approach through a descriptive analysis and inferential statistics testing (t-test).

Results

Sociodemographics and SM usage patterns

First, we wanted to understand the general habits of students' use of SM in their private lives. A total of 93.14% of the participants indicated that they used SM daily, with 66.86% spending less than two hours a day and 33.14% spending more than two hours a day. Students were also asked about their perceptions of whether their use of SM was excessive and what they thought of the population's daily use of SM. The majority of the students (98.29%) thought they spent too many hours a day on SM. Furthermore, regarding their perceptions of the population's use of SM, 54.29% of them thought that people spend too many hours on SM, while 45.71% disagreed.

We also attempted to learn about the devices that students use to access SM and where they learned how to use SM (see Table 3). Almost all of the students reported accessing SM through their smartphones (98.29%). Most indicated that they learned to use SM on their own (80%), some learned to use SM through their friends (18.86%), and a small percentage of students indicated that they learned to use SM at university (1.49%).

Table 3. Devices used to access SM and how students learned to use SM

What is the device you use most to access SM?	Smartphone	Tablet	Laptop	Total
Male	131 (97.76)	1 (.75)	2 (1.49)	134 (76.57)
Female	41 (100)	0	0	41 (23.43)
Total	172 (98.29)	1 (.57)	2 (1.14)	175
How did you learn to use SM?	On my own	With friends	At university	Total
Male	108 (80.60)	24 (17.91)	2 (1.49)	134 (76.57)
Female	32 (78.05)	9 (21.95)	0	41 (23.43)
Total	140 (80)	33 (18.86)	2 (1.14)	175

Note: percentage in parentheses.

The next aspect examined was the importance that students give to SM in their daily lives (see Table 4). In this case, the rating scale was from 1 to 10, with 1 agreeing that SM is very unimportant and 10 considering it very important. In this area, males obtained higher scores than females, although after making a comparison of means employing a t-test for independent samples, such differences were not significant ($p > .05$).

Table 4. Comparison of means on the importance of SM in life

	n	Mean	SD
Male	134 (76.57)	7.19	1.57
Female	41 (23.43)	6.95	1.50

Note: percentage in parentheses; SD = standard deviation.

COVID-19 lockdown SM usage patterns

This research aimed to identify the SM habits of the participants during the lockdown, specifically in the area of viewing or practicing PA. First, practically all participants viewed PA proposals on SM (96.83%) during the lockdown. Second, 67.16% of men and 85.37% of women used SM to practice PA (see Table 5). Finally, we employed statistical analysis to determine whether visualization habits changed according to gender. The results of this study indicate that gender did not have a significant relationship with visualizing PA proposals on SM ($p > .05$). Gender was not related to visualizing PA proposals on SM. However, the relationship between gender and using SM to practice PA was confirmed; gender was shown to be related to a greater use of SM for practicing PA, with women obtaining a higher percentage in proportion.

Table 5. Viewing PA on SM and using SM for PA

Have visualized PA on SM	Yes	No	Total	P
Male	51 (98.08)	1 (1.92)	52 (82.54)	
Female	10 (90.91)	1 (9.09)	11 (17.46)	
Total	61 (96.83)	2 (3.17)	63	
Have used SM for PA	Yes	No	Total	
Male	90 (67.16)	44 (32.84)	134 (76.57)	
Female	35 (85.37)	6 (14.63)	41 (23.43)	*
Total	125 (71.43)	50 (28.57)	175	

Note: percentage in parentheses; * $p > .05$.

Afterwards, the participants were asked whether they thought SM was helpful for the practice of PA for people outside of the field of sports science. The results indicate that 100% of both the men and women thought SM was helpful for the practice of PA by the rest of the population during the lockdown period.

In addition, the students were asked explicitly about which SM platform they used to view proposals for PA during the lockdown (see Table 6). The results indicate that the majority of the students used YouTube and Instagram to view PA proposals, both in the case of men (YouTube, 91.79%; Instagram, 91.79%) and women (YouTube, 87.80%; Instagram, 95.12%). The students were also asked about which SM platforms they used for PA by themselves. As can be seen in Table 7, the SM platform that stands out the most in this regard is again YouTube, as 52.24% of the men and 60.98% of the women declared that they used this platform to practice PA during the lockdown. As before, Instagram came in second place, with 34.33% of the men and 60.98% of the women reporting using this medium to practice PA, despite the fact that the percentages show a greater difference than what they previously showed, especially in the case of Instagram.

Table 6. SM platforms on which students saw PA proposals during the lockdown

	Facebook		YouTube		Twitter		LinkedIn		Instagram		Snapchat		TikTok		WhatsApp	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Male (134)	85 (63.43)	49 (36.57)	11 (8.21)	123 (91.79)	91 (67.91)	43 (32.09)	63 (47.01)	71 (52.99)	11 (8.21)	123 (91.79)	134 (100)	0	88 (65.67)	46 (34.33)	70 (52.24)	64 (47.76)
Female (41)	22 (53.66)	19 (46.34)	5 (12.20)	36 (87.80)	37 (90.24)	4 (9.76)	17 (41.46)	24 (58.54)	2 (4.88)	39 (95.12)	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	27 (65.85)	14 (34.15)	24 (58.54)	17 (41.46)
	Pinterest		Vimeo		MySpace		Tumblr		Moodle		Blogs		Wikis		None	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Male (134)	132 (98.51)	2 (1.49)	132 (98.51)	2 (1.49)	134 (100)	0	134 (100)	0	131 (97.76)	3 (2.24)	123 (91.79)	11 (8.21)	133 (99.25)	1 (.75)	132 (98.51)	2 (1.49)
Female (41)	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	41 (100)	0	41 (100)	0	41 (100)	0	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	38 (92.68)	3 (7.32)	41 (100)	0	41 (100)	0

Note: percentage in parentheses.

Finally, the students were asked about different aspects of the relationship between SM and the practice of PA during the COVID-19 lockdown to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of the use of SM for the visualization or promotion of PA. The results were measured on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated total disagreement with the statement and 5 indicated total agreement. The results (see Table 8) show that all of the values of both males and females were above the central value of the scale. In terms of mean ratings by gender, the best ratings for both men and women appear in the item related to the facilitating role of SM in promoting PA during the lockdown, with means of 4.57 (± 0.68) and 4.51 (± 0.51), respectively. Likewise, it can be observed that the worst evaluation also coincides in males and females: the statement about sharing achievements as motivation to continue training, with mean values of 3.19 (± 1.32) and 3.15 (± 1.32), respectively. Concerning the comparison between genders, a t-test showed no significant differences according to this gender variable ($p > .05$).

Table 7. SM platforms students used to practice PA proposals during the lockdown

	Facebook		YouTube		Twitter		LinkedIn		Instagram		Snapchat		TikTok		WhatsApp	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Male (134)	128 (95.52)	6 (4.48)	64 (47.76)	70 (52.24)	126 (94.03)	8 (5.97)	132 (98.51)	2 (1.49)	88 (65.67)	46 (34.33)	133 (99.25)	1 (.75)	132 (98.51)	2 (1.49)	115 (85.82)	19 (14.18)
Female (41)	39 (95.12)	2 (4.88)	16 (39.02)	25 (60.98)	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	36 (87.80)	5 (12.20)	16 (39.02)	25 (60.98)	41 (100)	0	38 (92.68)	3 (7.32)	37 (90.24)	4 (9.76)
	Pinterest		Vimeo		MySpace		Tumblr		Moodle		Blogs		Wikis		None	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Male (134)	133 (99.25)	1 (.75)	134 (100)	0	133 (99.25)	1 (.75)	134 (100)	0	134 (100)	0	133 (99.25)	1 (.75)	134 (100)	0	96 (71.64)	38 (28.36)
Female (41)	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	41 (100)	0	41 (100)	0	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	40 (97.56)	1 (2.44)	41 (100)	0	36 (87.80)	5 (12.20)

Note: percentage in parentheses.

Table 8. Perceptions regarding the relationship of SM use and PA during the lockdown

		n	Mean	SD
My daily use of SM has increased.	M	134	4.18	1.06
	F	41	4.27	1.18
Watching videos of other people doing PA motivates me to train.	M	134	3.40	1.17
	F	41	3.51	1.25
Sharing my achievements through SM motivates me to keep training.	M	134	3.19	1.32
	F	41	3.15	1.32
SM can help make new sporting disciplines, training proposals, or exercises visible.	M	134	4.35	.77
	F	41	4.54	.75
I have learned about new disciplines, training proposals, or exercises through SM.	M	134	3.52	1.19
	F	41	3.83	1.26
SM facilitates the promotion of PA during the lockdown.	M	134	4.57	.68
	F	41	4.71	.51
SM is more important in promoting PA and sports during the lockdown than before.	M	134	4.41	.83
	F	41	4.56	.59
After the lockdown, I will continue to use SM to follow or participate in training proposals.	M	134	3.51	1.19
	F	41	3.88	1.08

Note: M = male; F = female; n = sample size; SD = standard deviation.

Discussion

Concerning the general use of SM, it is clear that the majority of the students use SM daily, which coincides with what some studies have indicated regarding the important role that SM has in the day-to-day life of young people (Evans, 2014; Osgerby & Rush, 2015; Zachos et al., 2018). Furthermore, it should be noted that almost all of the students (98.29%) thought they used SM too much. This could suggest that SM use causes harm (e.g., sleep disturbances, low self-esteem, exposure to fake news, or other issues such as trolling or cyberbullying), as some

studies have pointed out (e.g., Baccarella et al., 2018; Bailin et al., 2014). Given these risks, it would be appropriate for students at different educational stages to be trained in using these tools responsibly. The smartphone is the most widely used digital device for accessing SM, a tool that accompanies students practically all day long. Furthermore, smartphones were even more important during the lockdown when accessing content. As stated by Angosto et al. (2020), sports managers ought to consider use of these digital devices as an opportunity to expose customers and new audiences to their products.

Only 2% of students indicated that they learned to use SM at university, which is a remarkable result with important implications. Given the importance of SM in people's personal and professional lives (Zachos et al., 2018), it is striking that students indicated they did not learn to use SM at university. Considering that the students have grown up in a digital world (Adams et al., 2018) and that future professionals in the sports industry must possess digital skills (Manning et al., 2017), sports science curricula should be adapted to the current reality of society and the PA and sports sector. Indeed, if SM can help attract and inspire people to be more active and participate in sports, as Hayes (2020) points out, it is important to train students to use SM for this purpose. This is particularly important given that COVID-19 has further advanced the digitalization of the sports industry and social and mobility restrictions continue to occur in response to the continuation of the pandemic. These changes to curricula would probably facilitate students' future incorporation into the labor market and, according to Dinning (2017), the ultimate aim of universities is to develop employable graduates. In any case, this number (2%) is in line with what has been reported by authors such as Manca and Ranieri (2016a, 2016b), who point out that due to cultural resistance, pedagogical aspects, or institutional constraints, academic institutions and faculty are still not very inclined to include SM in different educational practices. Therefore, we concur with several authors (e.g., Manca & Ranieri, 2016a, 2016b; Manning et al., 2017) that it is necessary to provide support and training for educators to overcome these barriers. Concerning the habits of consuming SM to visualize or practice PA, most of the sample (96.83%) visualized PA using these tools, and 71.43% engaged in PA during the lockdown. On the other hand, it is worth noting that significant gender differences have been found concerning engaging in PA at home using SM, with women doing so more than men. In this context, the results are not in line with the findings of studies measuring gender differences between men and women that have reported that men are more physically active than women regardless of age (Hands et al., 2016) or country (Bergier et al., 2016). This finding could encourage future studies to explore this issue in other populations to determine whether there are gender differences in the consumption of PA proposals on SM. The results of these studies could provide valuable information for sports managers and fitness trainers who offer these types of services.

YouTube is a SM platform for sharing videos, and Instagram began as a SM platform focused on the picture format but has evolved towards the video format thanks to its stories and recent Instagram Live function. These two platforms have emerged as the most popular for both viewing and practicing PA using SM at home. These results are logical since the video and live formats are the most suitable for viewing PA proposals on SM. It is also worth noting the emergence of LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and especially TikTok as SM platforms on which the students visualized PA proposals. These SM platforms represent opportunities for sports managers to reach more professional targets (LinkedIn), more confident familiar user targets such as family and friends (WhatsApp), or teenagers and youth (TikTok).

Finally, concerning the perceptions of sports science students about the use of SM to visualize or practice PA during the lockdown, it should be noted that all items exceed the central value of the measurement scale, showing the important value these tools have had for students to see others perform PA, gain motivation to do so themselves, learn new disciplines, or promote sports practice. This information reflects the versatility that SM can have in the sports industry and shows how these platforms can play an essential role in extreme situations such as a lockdown. Given the importance of being physically active during the lockdown period to avoid health problems (Constandt et al., 2020), and considering that the restrictions associated with the pandemic have adversely affected the sports industry (Ratten, 2020), relying on the use of SM to practice PA at home is likely a good option for the population. This is also notable considering the uncertainty about when, if ever, it will be possible to return to pre-COVID-19 normality in the sports industry and in spaces such as gyms and sports centers. Furthermore, lockdowns may occur in the future with additional COVID-19 waves. While increasing the vaccinated population and the extent of herd immunity may help prevent future lockdowns, the reality is that the emergence of new COVID-19 strains and variants may lead to selective confinement in specific regions around the world. In this study, the students expressed an intention to continue using SM to follow or participate in training proposals after the lockdown. Due to the circumstances described above, sports managers must continue to invest in and improve services offered through SM given the role these tools can play in the context of a pandemic.

Limitations and directions for future research

While we believe this study is unique in its examination of the perceptions that undergraduate sports science students have about visualizing and practicing PA using SM during the COVID-19 lockdown, it is not without limitations. The study was carried out with a sample of PA and sports science students from a Spanish university. As in most of the studies in Spain based on this type of sample, there is a gender sample bias, with a considerably higher number of men than women (Garay et al., 2018). Therefore, from a gender perspective, caution should be advised when interpreting the results. In addition, due to the geographical location of the sample and the nature of the sample body, there may also be biases that reduce the generalizability of the results. Thus, it would be of great value to carry out similar studies among students from other countries or cultural backgrounds to determine whether differences exist. In addition, it would also be valuable to carry out specific studies with a sample that is not directly linked to the field of sport to identify other PA habits using SM in other populations. Furthermore, it could be valuable to test the psychometric properties of the LPAPSM scale with other samples, as well as its possible adaptation to other languages and similar situations in order to make cross-cultural comparisons.

In this study, participants were not asked about the specific use of sports apps (e.g., Freeletics, Jefit, SWEAT, Adidas Training, and Daily Yoga). These apps facilitate training at home or in other environments. Since these apps incorporate several social features such as a system of exchanging users' comments and photos, fitness challenges, and other competitive elements among users, they can be considered a specific new type of SM that could be labelled as sports apps or fitness apps. This type of SM is of great interest to the sports industry, and its user base is increasing. The use of sports apps in particular grew during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Therefore, future studies that investigate this type of SM, such as the one recently published by Angosto et al. (2020), are of great interest to both the industry and sports academies.

The effects of this situation on the big tech giants (e.g., Facebook, Google, and Amazon), which have made huge profits during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ovide, 2021; Yeo, 2021), also remain to be explored. The public health role of these corporations, which have reached collaboration agreements with public health authorities in the digital response to COVID-19 (Storeng & de Bengy Puyvallée, 2021), needs to be investigated in future studies, especially in relation to the use of SM to promote and facilitate healthy PA.

Finally, although research linked to COVID-19 and sports has not been slow to arise through publications that explore the impact of the pandemic on sports, no studies have yet been published on the issue raised in this article. Considering this, and acknowledging the limitations outlined above, this study is a novelty in this field and provides results to be considered by sports managers and sports science faculties. Nevertheless, it needs to be complemented by further similar studies given the impact that COVID-19 is having on reshaping the entire sports industry.

Conclusions and practical implications

This study explored the perceptions of a group of undergraduate sports science students on visualizing and practicing PA using SM during the first COVID-19 lockdown period in Spain. This group will probably be the future managers or promoters of PA and the driving force behind both face-to-face and online sports products and services. Therefore, it is important for them to receive specific training in the university context so they may offer quality PA proposals on SM in the future. This issue is particularly pressing given how the process of digitalization has been accelerated by the pandemic and given that people are increasingly using SM in their daily personal and professional lives. However, the results of this study show that students do not feel they are given this training at university, which may form a knowledge gap that affects their professional future. Therefore, this study has implications at a pedagogical level, suggesting that professors, academic instructors, and trainers introduce SM in their classes to connect the reality and needs of the professional sports sector with the university sphere. In addition, universities should rethink their curricula by creating new formats that incorporate SM and by providing training support to faculty so that they can introduce SM in the classroom.

The results show how students of sports science used SM during the COVID-19 lockdown to visualize or practice PA. The results also show that students perceived these communication tools as channels through which to motivate themselves, promote PA, or learn about new training disciplines. YouTube and Instagram were the SM platforms chosen by sports science students for viewing or practicing PA. Beyond this SM platform, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and TikTok are emerging as alternatives that can generate niche business opportunities for sports managers and fitness trainers. As for the gender variable, it has a significant influence in relation to the practice of PA using SM, with females being more likely to use SM for PA than men. This information has direct implications for

professionals of the PA and sports industry (e.g., fitness center managers and personal trainers). Thus, it can be valuable for sports managers to adapt their proposals for PA on SM to target females or launch their proposals on the SM platforms that are most popular among the female population. Governments can use SM to carry out campaigns to promote healthy habits through the implementation of PA.

The results of this study also have broader implications for health. Confined populations naturally increase their sedentary habits. In this case, SM platforms have emerged as appropriate tools for promoting or facilitating PA that positively affects the health of the population. Governments can take advantage of SM to carry out PA promotion campaigns or develop specific health policies that reach out to citizens directly through SM.

Additionally, the study has implications for the specific field of study that has developed around the impact that COVID-19 has had on PA and the sports industry. In this sense, this study contributes to the existing literature through the creation and psychometric analysis of the properties of the LPAPSM scale, which can be used during possible future lockdowns that may unfortunately occur due to the expansion of the COVID-19 pandemic.

All in all, this study shows how SM has provided new channels for the sports industry to reach customers or generate new customers during the COVID-19 lockdown period. With the uncertainty of the pandemic's progression and potential for future lockdowns, sports managers must continue to explore the possibilities offered by SM. In short, SM offers an opportunity for sports managers to transform the negative situation caused by COVID-19 into something positive for the sports industry by providing new ways to bring sports products to the population.

Ethics approval and informed consent

The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013).

Competing interests

There are no conflicts of interest associated with this manuscript, financial or otherwise.

Funding

This study did not receive any forms of funding.

Acknowledgments

The first author of this work is grateful for the support of the predoctoral contract "FPU15/05670" granted by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities, and by the postdoctoral contract for scientific excellence in the development of the "Plan Propio de I+D+i", co-financed by the European Social Fund.

The authors would also like to thank the two reviewers for their contributions, which improved the first draft of the manuscript.

References

- Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., Séguin, B., & Nzindukiyimana, O. (2015). Social media Scholarship in Sport Management Research: A Critical Review. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(6), 601-618. <https://doi.org/10.1123/JSM.2014-0296>
- Adams, B., Raes, A., Montrieux, H., & Schellens, T. (2018). "Pedagogical tweeting" in higher education: Boon or bane? *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 15(1), 19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-018-0102-5>
- Angosto, S., García-Fernández, J., Valantine, I., & Grimaldi-Puyana, M. (2020). The intention to use fitness and physical activity apps: a systematic review. *Sustainability*, 12(16), 6641. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12166641>
- Baccarella, C. V., Wagner, T. F., Kietzmann, J. H., & McCarthy, I. P. (2018). Social media? It's serious! Understanding the dark side of social media. *European Management Journal*, 36(4), 431-438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2018.07.002>
- Bailin, A., Milanaik, R., & Adesman, A. (2014). Health implications of new age technologies for adolescents. *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*, 26(5), 605-619. <https://doi.org/10.1097/mop.0000000000000140>
- Barkley, J. E., Lepp, A., Santo, A., Glickman, E., & Dowdell, B. (2020). The relationship between fitness app use and physical activity behavior is mediated by exercise identity. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 108, 106313. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106313>

- Bergier, J., Bergier, B., & Tsos, A. (2016). Variations in physical activity of male and female students from different countries. *Iranian Journal of Public Health*, 45(5), 705-707.
- Constandt, B., Thibaut, E., De Bosscher, V., Scheerder, J., Ricour, M., & Willem, A. (2020). Exercising in times of lockdown: An analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on levels and patterns of exercise among adults in Belgium. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(11), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17114144>
- Coughlin, S. S., Caplan, L. S., & Williams, V. (2019). Home-based physical activity interventions for breast cancer patients receiving primary therapy: A systematic review. *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*, 178(3), 513-522. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10549-019-05424-4>
- Dinning, T. (2017). Preparing sports graduates for employment: Satisfying employers expectations. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 7(4), 354-368. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-02-2017-0017>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Hughes, D. L., Coombs, C., Constantiou, I., Duan, Y., Edwards, J. S., Gupta, B., Lal, B., Misra, S., Prashant, P., Raman, R., Rana, N.P., Sharma, S.K., & Upadhyay, N. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on information management research and practice: Transforming education, work and life. *International Journal of Information Management*, 55, 102211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102211>
- Elhai, J. D., Yang, H., McKay, D., & Asmundson, G. J. (2020). COVID-19 anxiety symptoms associated with problematic smartphone use severity in Chinese adults. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 274, 576-582. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.05.080>
- Evans, A. B., Blackwell, J., Dolan, P., Fahlén, J., Hoekman, R., Lenneis, V., McNarry, G., Smith, M., & Wilcock, L. (2020). Sport in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic: Towards an agenda for research in the sociology of sport. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 17(2), 85-95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2020.1765100>
- Evans, C. (2014). Twitter for teaching: can social media be used to enhance the process of learning? *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 45(5), 902-915. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12099>
- Filo, K., Lock, D., & Karg, A. (2015). Sport and social media research: A review. *Sport Management Review*, 18(2), 166-181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.11.001>
- Flynn, A., Allen, N. E., Dennis, S., Canning, C. G., & Preston, E. (2019). Home-based prescribed exercise improves balance-related activities in people with Parkinson's disease and has benefits similar to centre-based exercise: A systematic review. *Journal of Physiotherapy*, 65(4), 189-199. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jphys.2019.08.003>
- Gao, Z., & Lee, J. E. (2019). Emerging technology in promoting physical activity and health: challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 8(11), 1830. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm8111830>
- Garay, B., Elcoroaristizabal, E., Vizcarra, M. T., Prat, M., Serra, P., & Soler, S. (2018). ¿Existe sesgo de género en los estudios de ciencias de la actividad física y el deporte? *Retos*, 34, 150-154. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v0i34.58846>
- Goethals, L., Barth, N., Guyot, J., Hupin, D., Celarier, T., & Bongue, B. (2020). Impact of home quarantine on physical activity among older adults living at home during the COVID-19 pandemic: Qualitative interview study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 3(1), e19007. <https://doi.org/10.2196/19007>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. (2006). *Multivariate data analysis*. Pearson University Press.
- Hammami, A., Harrabi, B., Mohr, M., & Krustup, P. (2020). Physical activity and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): specific recommendations for home-based physical training. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1757494>
- Hands, B., Parker, H., Larkin, D., Cantell, M., & Rose, E. (2016). Male and female differences in health benefits derived from physical activity: implications for exercise prescription. *Journal of Womens Health, Issues and Care*, 5(4), 1000238. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2325-9795.1000238>
- Hayes, M. (2020). Social media and inspiring physical activity during COVID-19 and beyond. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1794939>
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Lloret-Segura, S., Ferreres-Traver, A., Hernández-Baeza, A., & Tomás-Marco, I. (2014). Exploratory item factor analysis: a practical guide revised and updated. *Anales de Psicología*, 30(3), 1151-1169. <https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.30.3.199361>
- López-Aguado, M., & Gutiérrez-Provecho, L. (2019). Cómo realizar e interpretar un análisis factorial exploratorio utilizando SPSS. *REIRE Revista d'Innovació i Recerca en Educació*, 12(2), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1344/reire2019.12.227057>
- Manca, S., & Ranieri, M. (2016a). Facebook and the others. Potentials and obstacles of Social Media for teaching in higher education. *Computers & Education*, 95, 216-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.01.012>

- Manca, S., & Ranieri, M. (2016b). "Yes for sharing, no for teaching!": Social media in academic practices. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 29, 63-74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.12.004>
- Manning, R., Keiper, M., & Jenny, S. (2017). Pedagogical innovations for the millennial sport management student: Socratic and Twitter. *Sport Management Education Journal*, 11(1), 45-54. <https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.2016-0014>
- Mutz, M., Müller, J., & Reimers, A. K. (2021). Use of digital media for home-based sports activities during the COVID-19 pandemic: results from the German SPOVID survey. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(9), 4409. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094409>
- Nabity-Grover, T., Cheung, C. M. K., & Thatcher, J. B. (2020). Inside out and outside in: How the COVID-19 pandemic affects self-disclosure on social media. *International Journal of Information Management*, 55, 102188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102188>
- Nicola, M., Alsafi, Z., Sohrabi, C., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., Iosifidis, C., Agha, M., & Agha, R. (2020). The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review. *International Journal of Surgery*, 78, 185-193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijsu.2020.04.018>
- Osgerby, J., & Rush, D. (2015). An exploratory case study examining undergraduate accounting students' perceptions of using Twitter as a learning support tool. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 13(3), 337-348. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2015.10.002>
- Ovide, S. (2021, July 1). How big tech won the pandemic. *The New York Times*. Retrieved 06.08.21. from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/technology/big-tech-pandemic.html>
- Parnell, D., Widdop, P., Bond, A., & Wilson, R. (2020). COVID-19, networks and sport. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1750100>
- Pekmezi, D., Ainsworth, C., Joseph, R. P., Williams, V., Desmond, R., Meneses, K., Bess, M., & Demark-Wahnefried, W. (2017). Pilot trial of a home-based physical activity program for African American women. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 49(12), 2528-2536. <https://doi.org/10.1249/MSS.0000000000001370>
- Ratten, V. (2020). Coronavirus and international business: An entrepreneurial ecosystem perspective. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 62(5), 629-634. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.22161>
- Schnitzer, M., Schöttl, S. E., Kopp, M., & Barth, M. (2020). COVID-19 stay-at-home order in Tyrol, Austria: Sports and exercise behaviour in change? *Public Health*, 185, 218-220. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2020.06.042>
- Shariat, A., Cleland, J. A., & Hakakzadeh, A. (2020). Home-based exercises during the COVID-19 quarantine situation for office workers: A commentary. *Work*, 66(2), 381-382. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-203190>
- Stanford, F. C., & Salles, A. (2021). Physician athletes promoting physical fitness through social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Health Promotion Practice*, 22(3), 295-297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839920988261>
- Stanton, R., To, Q. G., Khalesi, S., Williams, S. L., Alley, S. J., Thwaite, T. L., Fenning, A. S., & Vandelanotte, C. (2020). Depression, Anxiety and Stress during COVID-19: Associations with Changes in Physical Activity, Sleep, Tobacco and Alcohol Use in Australian Adults. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(11), 4065. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17114065>
- Storeng, K. T., & de Bengy Puyvallée, A. (2021). The smartphone pandemic: How big tech and public health authorities partner in the digital response to Covid-19. *Global Public Health*, 16(8-9), 1482-1498. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2021.1882530>
- Su, Y., Baker, B. J., Doyle, J. P., & Yan, M. (2020). Fan engagement in 15 seconds: Athletes' relationship marketing during a pandemic via TikTok. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 13(3), 436-446. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2020-0238>
- Tanaka, J.S., & Huba, G.H. (1989). A general coefficient of determination for covariance structure models under arbitrary GLS estimation. *British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology*, 42(2), 233-239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8317.1989.tb00912.x>
- Timmerman, M.E., & Lorenzo-Seva, U. (2011). Dimensionality assessment of ordered polytomous items with Parallel analysis. *Psychological Methods*, 16(2), 209-220. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023353>
- Wackerhage, H., Everett, R., Krüger, K., Murgia, M., Simon, P., Gehlert, S., Neuberger, E., Baumert, P., & Schönfelder, M. (2020). Sport, exercise and COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. *Deutsche Zeitschrift Für Sportmedizin*, 71(5), E1-E11. <https://doi.org/10.5960/dzsm.2020.441>
- We Are Social (2020). *Digital around the world in April 2020*. Retrieved 12.08.20. from: <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2020/04/digital-around-the-world-in-april->
- World Health Organization. (2020a). *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Weekly Epidemiological Update (25 April 2021)*. Retrieved 29.04.21. from: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---27-april-2021>

- World Health Organization (2020b). *Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak*. Retrieved 07.08.20. from: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2
- World Medical Association. (2013). World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. *JAMA*, 310(20), 2191-2194. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.281053>
- Yeo, T. J. (2020). Sport and exercise during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, 27(12), 1239-1241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2047487320933260>
- Yeo, S. (2021). Tech companies and public health care in the ruins of COVID. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 1617-1636.
- Zachos, G., Paraskevopoulou-Kollia, E.-A., & Anagnostopoulos, I. (2018). Social media use in higher education: a review. *Education Sciences*, 8(4), 194. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8040194>

This is Open Access article distributed under the terms of CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License.



“We Can’t Get Stuck in Old Ways”: Swedish Sports Club’s Integration Efforts With Children and Youth in Migration

Authors’ contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

Krister Hertting*^{1A-E} , Inger Karlefors^{2A-E}

¹Halmstad University, Halmstad, Sweden

²Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden

Received: 02.09.2020

Accepted: 06.09.2021

***Correspondence:** Krister Hertting; School of Health and Welfare, Halmstad University, Box 823, 301 18 Halmstad, Sweden; e-mail: Krister.Hertting@hh.se

Abstract

The last years many people have been forcibly displaced due to circumstances such as conflicts in the world, and many people have come to Sweden for shelter. It has been challenging for Swedish society to receive and guide newcomers through the resettlement process, and many organizations in civil society, such as sports clubs, have been invited to support the resettlement. However, a limited numbers of studies has drawn the attention to sports clubs experiences. Therefore the aim of the paper was enhance understanding of sports clubs’ prerequisites and experiences of integration efforts with immigrant children and youth. Ten Swedish clubs with experience of working with newcomers participated. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and analyzed with qualitative content analysis. Two categories were identified: *Struggling with sporting values and organization* and *Seeing integration in everyday activities*. The clubs experienced that integration occurs in everyday activities, but current ideas focusing competition and rigid organization of sports constrained possibilities for integrating newcomers with no or limited former experience of club sports. The clubs experienced potential to contribute to personal development, social connectedness and enjoyment in a new society and building bridges between cultures. In conclusion, clubs cannot solve the challenges of resettlement in society but have potential to be part of larger societal networks of integration.

Key words: Integration, youth sports, qualitative methods, migration, newcomers

Introduction

Throughout history, migration for economic, political and social reasons has been a natural part of global society, and sport has long served as a global link between people and across cultures. According to the UNHCR (2020), 70.8 million people across the globe have been forcibly displaced due to circumstances such as conflicts and climate change. In 2015, 156,000 asylum seekers entered Sweden (UNHCR, 2020), and in 2017, Sweden was the fourth largest recipient of asylum applications in the EU (Eurostat, 2018). It has been a challenge for Swedish society to receive and guide newcomers through the resettlement process, and many organizations in Swedish civil society, such as the Sports Confederation [SSC], have been invited to support the resettlement process for newcomers. The Swedish government allocated approximately EUR 6.5 million annually between 2015–2018 to develop opportunities for immigrants to participate in sports to integrate into society (SSC 2017). Swedish society

has a long tradition of voluntarism in club sports (Bairner & Darby, 2001; Toftegard Stöckel et al., 2010) as a means to open up opportunities for all residents to participate, irrespective of physical, economic, social, cultural or religious background (SSC 2009). In the European Commission's (2014) Eurobarometer on sport and physical activity, 25% of Swedish respondents indicated that they volunteered time to work in sport, which was the highest level in the EU. In 2014–2015, more than 70% of Swedish children aged 12–15 years participated in sports in a club, and Sweden had approximately 822,000 volunteer trainers, coaches, leaders and board members in 20,000 sports clubs (SSC, 2017).

Integration and sports

Coming to a new society is associated with complex processes of maintaining continuity and incorporating change into people's lives. Integration is affected by the reason for migration (e.g. immigration, asylum, voluntary move, mobility and permanence), the political context in society of origin and society of settlement, individual factors and social support (Berry, 1997). Integration is described by Penninx and Garcés-Masareñas (2016) as the process of *becoming an accepted part of society*. They reject the notion that integration is a linear process of assimilation or adaption to a host society. According to Ager and Strang (2008), the concept of assimilation is linked to the assumption that newcomers will adapt in such a way that they become indistinguishable from those already residing in the host society. But as Penninx and Garcés-Masareñas (2016) point out, integration can better be considered a multilayered process, driven by actors in the host society and involving legal/political, socio-economic and cultural/religious processes. There is, indeed, an inherent imbalance in the power relations between newcomers and organizations and institutions in the host society. However, Penninx and Garcés-Masareñas (2016) emphasize that it is the interaction between newcomers and the receiving society "...that determines the direction and the temporal outcomes of the integration process" (p. 17). Therefore, in this paper, integration is defined as a two-way interaction process between newcomers and host society citizens. According to Esses, Hamilton and Gaucher (2017), refugees initially require suitable housing and support to learn the host language followed by employment support and opportunities, health support, social connections and civic integration, where sports clubs can contribute to civic integration.

Sports, with its strong network of volunteer-based clubs, is often highlighted as an important facet of the civic integration process for newcomers (Agergaard, 2011; Ambrosini & Van der Leun, 2015; Fredriksson, Geidne & Eriksson, 2018; Spracklen, Long & Hylton, 2015), and participation in sports can create a sense of belonging for newcomers (Bergström-Wuolö, Dahlström, Hertting & Kostenius, 2018; Hertting & Karlefors, 2013; Walseth, 2008). In its White Paper on Sport, the European Commission (2007) stated that "sport can also facilitate the integration into society of migrants and persons of foreign origin as well as support intercultural dialogue" (p. 15). In a globalized society, integration through sport can serve as a vehicle for adapting to new cultures (Allen et al., 2010; Elbe et al., 2018; Lee & Funk, 2011; Verhagen & Boonstra, 2014). In a review article, O'Driscoll et al. (2014) found that physical activity and involvement in sports were used as a means of integration and increased participation in sports was associated with increased integration. In a Swiss study, Makarova and Herzog (2014) concluded that newcomers who participated in sports with Swiss peers reported a greater degree of social contact and increased feeling of integration. However, studies point out that clubs, coaches and leaders in general require more intercultural knowledge (Schinke et al., 2013; Spracklen, Long & Hylton, 2015; Walseth, 2008) and a readiness to understand the different cultural backgrounds of participants (Palmer, 2009; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2012). Interethnic relations in sports are often limited to the sports field (Spaaij, 2012; Spracklen, Long & Hylton, 2015; Walseth, 2004). This is also supported in a Swedish study, which concluded that sports seems to have limited impact on friendships between newcomers and native youth (Lundkvist et al., 2020). Power relations in terms of the dominance of existing traditions could therefore present a barrier to integration (Dowling, 2019; Forde et al., 2015; Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016; Skille, 2006; Walseth, 2004; Schinke et al., 2013;). Lee and Funk (2011) studied the way recreational sports can facilitate integration, and their results indicated that programs focusing on multicultural contacts (integration) were rated higher among participants than programs focusing on one-directional processes (assimilation). Forde et al. (2015) studied an award-winning community sports and recreation program for immigrants in Canada and concluded that limited attention was given to the mutual learning of physical cultures. Instead, the emphasis was assimilating immigrants to the current physical cultures provided by the host society. This is also supported by Dagkas (2018), who argues that recent immigrants in Western societies participate in PE and sport based on the dominant Western discourse. Thus, Dagkas (2018) questions the ability of sport to facilitate the integration of ethnic minority groups into society through sports activities. This is supported by Dowling (2019), who questions voluntary sports clubs' ability to develop ideas of cultural diversity.

From a broader societal perspective, researchers contest the notion that sports, and local clubs are general solutions to social problems such as marginalization (Dacombe, 2013; Dagkas, 2018; Ekholm, 2018). Osterlund and Seippel (2013) argue that civic integration is unevenly distributed among different groups, and sport has a varying ability to promote civic integration. In a study on social policy in Sweden, Ekholm (2016) argues that this solution has a limited impact on structural problems and creates a risk that the focus will turn to the individual as the source of the problem. Vandermeersch, Vos & Scheerder (2015) investigated the assumption that sports clubs facilitate social inclusion and concluded that socially vulnerable groups of children and youth are excluded from sports clubs to a greater degree. In line with results from Morgan & Costas Batlle (2019), Dagkas (2018) and Kelly (2010), the authors argue that inequality in sport is associated with inequality in society at large, and sport alone has a limited capacity to change the structural conditions that reinforce the exclusion of certain groups in society. Thedin Jakobsson et al. (2012) studied reasons why young people choose to remain or drop out of Swedish sports clubs and concluded that those with a certain disposition for sports and stronger cultural capital were more likely to remain in the sports clubs. Fernandes (2015) analyzed the introduction programs for immigrants in Sweden, Denmark and Norway and came to a similar conclusion; focus of the programs were on transforming the individual rather than transforming structures. Fernandes (2015:259) argued that focusing on structures “might reduce the potentially stigmatizing element of the programs and the framing of immigrants as a social problem that needs to ‘be fixed’”.

In summary, on the one hand there is support for the assumption that sport can facilitate integration into a new society. On the other hand, there are also studies criticizing and contesting this assumption. However, research on sports as a facilitator for integration has often focused on how the cultures and/or religions of immigrants have formed a barrier to participation in sports (Cortis, 2009; Fundberg, 2012; Spaij et al, 2019; Strandbu, 2005; Walseth & Fasting, 2004). Moreover, studies often highlight participants and policy perspectives of integration. Ryba, Schinke, Stambulova and Elbe (2017) argue that there is a knowledge gap in terms of sport clubs’ capacity to understand integration processes, and in a Swedish context no study has focused solely on the perspective of sports clubs.

Therefore, we aim to enhance understanding of sports clubs’ prerequisites and experiences of integration efforts with immigrant children and youth. How do clubs work with integration of newcomers? What challenges and solutions do clubs express?

Data collection and data analysis

We invited ten Swedish sports clubs with experience working actively to support integration for new children and youth immigrants to participate. The clubs were selected from two categories: (1) clubs which were highlighted as good examples by the SSC on their homepage and (2) clubs highlighted by the media as good examples. We had no prior contact with the clubs and invitations to the study were sent via e-mail to club representatives, requesting for participation of a person with insight into the club’s work with immigrants. This could be a board member, club manager or similar. The invitation contained information about the researchers, the project and research methods as well as information about research ethics. All clubs accepted the invitation and semi-structured interviews inspired by Kvale (2007) were conducted. The interviews were based on an interview guide with four themes: the club, the children, the leaders and sport as integration. The interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed interviews formed the basis of the qualitative content analysis (QCA) (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Schreier, 2012). In general, the focus of the content analysis may be manifest or latent content (c.f. Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). According to Schreier (2012), QCA is used when the content is less obvious and interpretation is necessary, i.e. latent content. To support the purposes of this paper and acquire an overview of the interviews, the transcribed data were first read individually by the authors. After the first naïve reading, we discussed interpretations in order to arrive at an initial shared understanding of the data. The next step was to identify and condense meaning units from the interviews (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The condensed meaning units served as a basis for the coding process or the content abstraction. The next step was categorization of the different codes, which resulted in nine categories. The categories were closely linked to the aim of the study but also served as a basis for exclusion, since data might not fall into two categories or could be excluded if it fell between two categories. When designing categories, the different codes were systematically analyzed to create categories with similar content. The final step in the analysis was to create main categories based on the subcategories. Two main categories were identified, and seven subcategories. The analysis process was non-linear and shifted back and forth between parts and the whole during the entire process.

Table 1. Overview of the clubs, their integration activities and function of informant

Club	Sport	Integration activities	Location	Function of informant
A	Multiple	Established for newcomers, sport and community activities to support integration	Town	Club founder and manager
B	Soccer	Soccer team for newcomers, community activities	Big city	Board member
C	Soccer	Former project for newcomers, which was postponed	Town	Club manager
D	Soccer	Needed more players. Developed activities such as youth center and collaboration with the school	Rural area	Club manager
E	Basketball	Started as a project, now part of ordinary activities, open basketball, cooperation with refugee accommodations	Big city	Chairman of the board
F	Floorball	Established for newcomers, providing sports and support establishment at the labor market	Big city	Club founder and manager
G	Basketball	Drop-in basketball, collaboration with schools and other clubs, support establishment on the labor market	City	Club manager
H	Soccer	A multicultural neighborhood, open for everyone, no particular activities for newcomers	Town	Club manager
I	Basketball	A multicultural neighborhood, helps with equipment, multilingual information, open for all, support schoolwork, youth center	Big city	Chairman of the board
J	Soccer and floorball	A multicultural neighborhood, cooperation with schools, multilingual information, drop – in sports, economic support structures	Town	Chairman of the board

Results

In the interviews two main categories were identified: *Struggling with sporting values and organization* and *Seeing integration in everyday activities*, which will be presented below.

Struggling with sporting values and organization

There was a strong belief among the clubs that sport could contribute to integration. However, the clubs expressed a need to adapt their activities in order to include all children and youth in the club. This category is characterized by the club's efforts to deal with organizational assimilation in their attempt to achieve integration.

One criticism was that, within sport, too much emphasis was on specific sports skills. The leader of Club A said: "To speak frankly and openly, there is one big club in this town, which took the most skilled players. Out of 20 youths from the refugee accommodation, one or two were sufficiently skilled, the rest were on try-outs but didn't possess the skills to be in a club. So instead they did nothing. That's the reason I started the club." Club C encountered a similar problem in its project with unaccompanied youth: "We had one or two immigrants who made an effort to practice with our junior team, but no one developed far enough to be part of the squad." The logic of competition was considered problematic by many of the clubs. Many young immigrants lacked experience within organized club sports. This was an aggravating aspect of being fully involved in a team: "The difficulty is that logics of competition and of integration collide. We must do something there. I don't know exactly what, but I think it's a key factor. And many of the youth come at a time of their lives when teams select players and competition and results become more important. And how do we solve that equation?... there's an exclusion mechanism right from the start", as Club B expressed it. Club F tried to overcome the logic of competition by starting a floorball team for players with no prior experience: "The problems are within sport itself. It is so focused on competition. It is aimed at scoring more goals, being at the top of the table and I'm very critical of this...you must place it in the proper context". Another aspect was the bureaucracy within Swedish sports, which the leader of Club H believed risked excluding young immigrants: "I think we make it unnecessarily complicated sometimes. We get bogged down in administration, registration must be carried out in a certain way and you definitely cannot play with another team if you're too young or too old; then you need special permission... We are Swedes and we are sometimes very rigid

in terms of bureaucracy and rules". Criticism of regulatory structures was expressed by most of the clubs and was considered to be a factor that prevented the participation of new child and youth immigrants in club sport, as Club E expressed: "...we can't get stuck in old ways of organizing sports, we must change". Hence, the clubs generally regarded the sporting values of competition, selection and focus on skills as inhibitory when receiving newcomers. In order to cope with this, the clubs developed different strategies.

The clubs also experienced financial challenges, and there was an awareness that individual's financial circumstances could exclude them from club sports. Special arrangements were required, often in cooperation between multiple actors. Club I had a solution: "We've had several uninsured children because their parents couldn't afford the club fees. Thus, a couple of years ago, we started cooperating with the local housing association, where anyone with financial problems can apply for financial support. They can then afford the membership fees and will be insured". Club E had noticed that young immigrants participated in basketball training at different times and discovered that not all youngsters had shoes. Therefore, they took turns participating: "Because we had a sports company as our sponsor and the municipality as a partner, we were able to solve the problem with the shoes in a joint cooperation". In summary, there was criticism that the organization of sport was too rigid, making access to sport more difficult for new young immigrants. This could result in a separation from sport if the sport culture was not assimilated. However, the clubs utilized different strategies to challenge traditional organization and sporting values in order to promote integration.

Some clubs reported that the start-up phase was problematic within their own organizations. In Club B it was advocated from members that the club first had to deal with its "core business", then focus on its activities with the newcomers: "There was a conflict around the team, or different opinions as to whether as a small and not perfectly functioning club, we should do this... And this opinion pops up occasionally. For instance, when we are short of coaches in a team they say: 'but the newcomer's team has five coaches'. So, I believe this view is present all the time". Some clubs also felt that other clubs hesitated to accept immigrants due to a lack of knowledge, which was expressed by Club C: "Some clubs get a bit scared. 'What do we need to know?' It's easier to take Kalle from Sweden with parents and everything into the club... I think if someone is visiting clubs and talking about meeting people from other cultures in a simple way, this is how it works if you are interested in testing out and inviting some young people from other countries. It would be less of a problem". Some clubs had received funding from the SSC to conduct specific projects, but there was a feeling of unequal allocation of funding from municipalities. Club A, which was established specifically for immigrants, felt unfairly treated by the municipality. The well-established club received funding: "This club has received SEK 1.1 million in integration funding. We don't receive any municipal funding. I think the municipality has already allocated its funding to the club, which is very big here. I don't know. Unfair sponsoring or what it can be, but it is very difficult for us to get funding from them [the municipality]." Collecting membership fees from young immigrants was generally a problem. Club B tried to solve this by using municipal funding for unaccompanied minors but ran into problems: "My idea was to take the municipal allowance and pay membership fees. But we are not allowed to use it for membership fees, only for material". In summary, some clubs experienced prejudice and unfairness within the club, as well as from other clubs and officials.

Seeing integration in everyday activities

The common experience from the clubs was that integration occurs in ordinary everyday activities. Projects and other forms of organization could be a good first step, but not enough to create intercultural meetings and integration according to the clubs.

The clubs had different strategies for attracting newcomers to sports, for instance attempting to identify creative ways to adapt activities and groups. However, a common view was that intercultural contact and integration is something that takes place in everyday activities. Club C ran a soccer project for new youth immigrants led by a committed leader but could not maintain the project after the project time elapsed: "...the closest form of contact we achieved from the project is that they [the youth] come and watch our home matches". Club D, located in a rural area, was about to discontinue its soccer team since it did not have enough players. Luckily, housing for refugee boys was established around the same time in the village, and the newcomers were invited to join the club. This also encouraged the locals to return to soccer. "So, everything actually stopped, and I thought there would be no players who could step in...I knew there were boys living in the refugee housing. So, I called and said: 'invite everyone who likes soccer to the Tuesday training session'. Increasingly, more boys attended and after a while we had 57 players, half of them from Sweden and half from other countries. There was a positive spirit and trend [among the Swedes]. 'Now I want to start again, now I want to join'...there has been a tremendous interest in soccer".

The clubs had different experiences in their contact with parents, but there was a consensus that it is important and difficult to involve parents in their child's sport activities. Obviously, this was not applicable to unaccompanied children and youth. One common problem was the language barrier, which Club H pointed out: "...for the new teams we will invite parents in a more inclusive way...often the youth have better language skills than their parents. This is perhaps where it fails because we send home messages in Swedish. We are planning to provide information in more languages and provide information about our club by stating, for example, 'this is us'. Ever since I came to the club, I have been told that we can't reach out to immigrant parents". Many clubs also regarded the parent's lack of knowledge about Swedish sport as problematic, as Club I stressed: "How we communicate with parents is the greatest challenge, in my view, and there is a missing link". In connection with this, the clubs saw the importance of having coaches from other ethnic backgrounds, something that Club A had experienced: "But then we have Zahra [a female coach with migrant background] who says: 'now you're in Sweden you must do things like this' – and the girls come. We are very lucky to have Zahra". In general, clubs stressed the importance of having coaches from different cultures. However, Club C criticized the current situation: "I think soccer is good because everyone can participate. However, if you look at the boards of clubs and associations, integration is poor. In this respect, sport has really failed to take care of leaders from other cultures".

The clubs tried to identify more flexible forms of organization in order to engage more participant groups. One strategy was to organize drop-in sport that was open to everyone. For example, during school holidays, clubs could offer open soccer or basketball for boys and girls of different ages. Club E had an open "basket for fun" session for unaccompanied young boys and Swedish boys twice a week: "We visit their homes. Perhaps 6–7 boys live in a group home, so the coach and I visit them and explain what our club is and what we do". Club B discovered that many new child and youth immigrants were eager to play soccer and engage in activities outside their homes. "So, we organized soccer in a specific team in the club. The initial plan was to cooperate with the surrounding clubs but many of the newcomers didn't feel welcome there, it was a case of double alienation: ...they wanted to play together, and the leader was hesitant and said: 'this is not integration, and this is contrary to everything I believe in'. But then, because they wanted it so much, she [the leader] agreed. 15–20 attended the first training session and now, after two years, there are 140". Club H often visited schools and discovered that many children wanted to play soccer but were a bit older (11–15 years) with no previous experience. Therefore, they started a mixed team, mostly for new child and youth immigrants: "We called it a mixed team. It comprised boys and girls of various ages and we initially wanted to transfer them into ordinary teams. But they were having so much fun in this team. There were other problems, such as you can't have different ages playing in matches. If most of the players are ten years old and three of them are fourteen, you still need to play with the older children".

Some clubs aimed to promote integration into society through sport. It is challenging to enter the labor market as a newcomer, and the clubs wanted to support the newcomers in this respect. The project leader in Club F considered sports as a means for accessing the labor market and initiated internships at workplaces: "I try to help guys who have been excluded, because I see sports as a tool for getting closer to work activities". Club G sought out cross-border cooperation with the municipality and organizations for work opportunities for youth, for instance, as coaches: "We believe this is a really important social function. We think it's important to encourage cross-border cooperation in order to create job opportunities to show that we see you – we think the skills you possess are important". Some clubs strove to be part of society at large and offered other activities, such as support for schoolwork and involvement in Swedish traditions and other societal activities. The coach at Club A, who worked with young asylum seekers, stated: "I invited a few guys to dinner at my house and then we went clubbing. They had never been to a night club [in Sweden]. You are given a special kind of ID card when you are an asylum seeker and it's not valid as regular ID. So many pubs and clubs deny them entry. But this time we made it. However, to live in Sweden for three years like 18 years old and never go to a pub is a very isolating experience". In summary, the clubs considered everyday activities to be the base for integration. Inclusive activities, being flexible as a club, involving parents, and connecting newcomers to worklife and society as a whole was considered important.

Discussion

The aim of the paper was to enhance understanding of sports clubs' prerequisites and experiences of integration efforts with immigrant children and youth. As a result of the analysis two main categories emerged. Each category can be considered distinct, though they do overlap to some extent. There are limitations to the study. Firstly, the ten total respondents represent a small sample, but based on the premises established for selection, this was the sample

size that met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Secondly, the club representatives had different functions (see Table 1), and their degree of involvement in integration efforts varied. This may have affected the results. However, we have emphasized internal validity, which requires us to make conscious decisions from basic assumptions in terms of design, data collection, interpretation and the reporting of empirical findings (Kvale, 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994). According to Whittenmore et al. (2001), this requires authenticity and integrity, which has been an integral part of this process. Internal validity is a prerequisite for transferability (Guba and Lincoln 1981; Polit and Beck, 2010), which means that it is possible to transfer the accuracy of the results to other similar contexts. To support our findings, we have used quotations from the participants in line with Guba and Lincoln (1981). Despite the limitations of this study, the findings may be applicable to, and have currency in, other similar contexts, which is an argument supported by Kvale (2007) and Yin (1994).

The clubs reported that current ideas and the organization of club sport in Sweden constrained possibilities for integrating newcomers into sport clubs. They questioned a dominating logic of competition and rigid organizational structures. This, according to the clubs, risks to exclude those newcomers who do not have resources to assimilate to dominating ideas of sport. The process of assimilation into dominant sport cultures has been highlighted by several authors (Forde, Lee, Mills & Frisby, 2015; Thedin Jakobsson et al., 2012; Dagkas, 2018). Thedin Jakobsson et al. (2012) argue that cultural capital and a predisposition to sport are crucial factors for participation in club sports. The clubs did in fact report that they experienced intersectional challenges. Many newcomers had limited resources regarding cultural and economic capital and lacked a predisposition to sport; clubs had different strategies to compensate for this, using, for instance, various flexible forms of organization and financial support.

Through supplementary SSC funding, many Swedish clubs have implemented projects aimed at child and youth immigrants, often group-specific activities. A problem acknowledged by the clubs was the issue of how to fully integrate participants in sports when they were separated from Swedes in everyday activities. As O'Driscoll et al. (2014) emphasize, a high level of integration has a positive nexus to participation in sports, and as Penninx and Garcés-Masareñas (2016) point out, integration as a two-way process is more likely to occur in intercultural meetings in everyday activities. However, participation does not automatically lead to integration (Walseth, 2004; Spaaij, 2012; Lundkvist et al., 2020). Interethnic bridges between teammates are often limited to the sports field (Walseth, 2004; Spaaij, 2012). There were positive examples: the rural club (D), which was in need of more players, became a vehicle for creating a bridge between the community as a whole and the hosted newcomers, as well as the clubs in areas which had transformed into multicultural clubs over the years. Common for these clubs were that everyday activities served as the base for intercultural meetings and integration. In general, bridge-building was more challenging for the clubs running targeted integration projects. One club highlighted that including girls was especially challenging. This is in line with former studies, where lack of sports identity could explain why some immigrant girls do not participate (Walseth & Fasting, 2004), as well as different cultural codes and conducts (Cortis, 2009).

There are positive discourses from society regarding the capacity of sport to promote the integration of new citizens (cf. the European Union, 2017; Agergaard, 2011; Ambrosini & Van der Leun, 2015; Fredriksson, Geidne & Eriksson, 2018; Dowling, 2019). However, from a research perspective, we argue, in line with Dagkas (2018), Ekholm (2016) and Osterlund & Seippel (2013), that there are critical points that need to be addressed regarding the capacity of sport promote civic integration into society. Echoing Ekholm (2016) and Evans (2010), we see a risk of too much reliance on local sports clubs to solve societal problems and a risk that persistent problems will be attributed to the individual instead. The clubs had different histories, activities and ideas, but they all experienced a lack of structural support for long-term change. The clubs in current study experienced a struggle between their own values and values and organization of sport as a whole. If sport is based on dominant society values (Dagkas, 2018), the struggle can be understood from the view of the cultural position of dominant society. Similar to the situation in Canada (Schmidtke, 2018), interculturalism needs to be on the structural and political agenda for organizations within sport. Nevertheless, taking the step from inclusion of individuals to developing inclusive structures is a challenge (Ekholm, 2016; Fernandes, 2015; Ambrosini and Van der Leun, 2015; Evans, 2010), which was pointed out by the clubs in our study.

Integration is complex and the clubs had different prerequisites, experiences and strategies. The clubs found it challenging to work in current organization of sport, with its strong tradition of competition, classifying systems, separation of participants (i.e. boys and girls) and starting at early age. Their experiences were that sports as organization is excluding newcomers with no prior experience of sport and lack of capital (cultural and economic). They acknowledged the fact that intercultural meetings and integration occurs in everyday activities, where projects and separate groups could serve as a first step in to sports, but is insufficient for integration. This allings with research that questions the ability of sport to facilitate integration (c.f. Dowling, 2019). The clubs were trying to bridge

what they perceived as a gap between societal challenges, sports organizational challenges and individuals. There are challenges for the SSC and its associations: membership is decreasing and the average age in sports clubs in Sweden is 11 due to, for instance, too much emphasis on competition at a young age and the failure to reach out to all groups in society (SSC, 2019). Structural changes have been initiated for the purpose of making sport more inclusive for more people across the whole lifespan (Strategy 2025). This could be beneficial for newcomers with limited experience in club sports. Current study indicated the complexity to include parents to newcomers in the clubs, as managers, coaches and other supportive functions. To include more coaches and participants with a variety of backgrounds can potentially provide sports with new possibilities to develop and become more relevant for societal development. However, the question about integration in to sports is more complex than ethnicity. As pointed out by Vandermeersch, Vos & Scheerder (2015), Morgan & Costas Batlle (2019), Dagkas (2018) and Kelly (2010), intersectional perspectives are required and sports has limited capacity to alone counteract on the exclusion of certain groups in society.

In conclusion, a major strength for sport is its global recognition and ability to attract young people. Sports clubs can also contribute to personal development, social connectedness and enjoyment in a new society. The clubs in current study saw potential and motivation to build bridges between cultures and be a part of larger societal intercultural networks. The clubs had good intentions and promoted a viewpoint based on intercultural values and joint opportunities for participation as well as cultural learning, but expressed a need for expanded organizational support to fully realize their goals.

The question of whether sports contribute to integration or not is still not fully answered. In our study, the clubs told both positive and critical anecdotes, but to what extent do sports contribute to integration into a new society? More studies are required in this field, focusing for instance on newly arrived parents views, involvement and experiences, longitudinal studies of newcomers and the role of sports, and perspectives of intersectionality.

Competing interests

No potential conflict of interest.

Funding

This work was supported by The Swedish Research Council for Sport Science under Grant P2014-0194. Apart from funding the council had no involvement in the study.

References

- Aggergaard, S. (2011) Development and appropriation of an integration policy for sport: how Danish sports clubs have become arenas for ethnic integration, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 3:3, 341–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2011.596158>
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21 (2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>
- Allen, J.T., Drane, D.D., Byon, K.K., & Mohn, R.S. (2010). Sport as a vehicle for socialization and maintenance of cultural identity: International students attending American universities. *Sport Management Review*, 13 (2010), 421–434. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2010.01.004>
- Ambrosini, M., & Van der Leun, J. (2015) Introduction to the Special Issue: Implementing Human Rights: Civil Society and Migration Policies. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 13 (2), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2015.1017632>
- Bairner, A., & Darby, P. (2001) The Swedish model and international sport. Lennart Johansson and the Governance of World Football, *International review for the sociology of sport*, 36 (3), 337–359. <https://doi.org/10.1177/101269001036003006>
- Berry, J.W. (1997). Immigration, Acculturation and Adaption. *Applied Psychology: an International Review*, 46 (1), 5–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Bergström-Wuolö, M., Dahlström, J., Hertting, K., & Kostenius, C. (2018). My heart has no hurt: The health of young immigrants. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMHS-02-2018-0004>
- Cortis, N. (2009). Social inclusion and sport. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. 44 (1), 91–106. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2009.tb00132.x>

- Dacombe, R. (2013). Sports clubs and civic inclusion: rethinking the poverty of association. *Sport in Society*, 16 (10), 1263–1278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2013.821252>
- Dagkas, S. (2018). “Is social inclusion through PE, Sport and PA still a rhetoric?” Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. *Educational Review*, 70 (1), 67–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1399629>
- Dowling, F. (2019). A critical discourse analysis of a local enactment of sport for integration policy: Helping young refugees or self-help for voluntary sports clubs? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690219874437>
- Ekholm, D. (2016). *Sport as a Means of Responding to Social Problems: Rationales of Government Welfare and Social Change*. Diss. Linköping: Linköping University.
- Ekholm, D. (2018). Governing by means of sport for social change and social inclusion: demarcating the domains of problematization and intervention. *Sport in Society*, 21 (11), 1777-1794. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2017.1417986>
- Elbe, A-M., Hatzigeorgiadis, A., Morela, E., Ries, F., Kouli, O., & Sanchez, X. (2018). Acculturation through sport: Different contexts different meanings. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16 (2), 178–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2016.1187654>
- Esses, V.M., Hamilton, L.K. & Gaucher, D. (2017). The Global Refugee Crisis: Empirical Evidence and Policy Implications for Improving Public Attitudes and Facilitating Refugee Resettlement. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 11 (1), 78–123. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12028>
- European Commission. (2007). *White paper on sport*. Brussels: Publications Office.
- European Commission. (2014). *Special Eurobarometer. Sport and physical activity*. Brussels: TNS Opinion & Social.
- European Union (2018). Immigration policy. *Fact Sheets on the European Union*. Brussels: European Parliament.
- Eurostat (2018). *Eurostat regional yearbook. 2018 edition*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Fernandes, A. G. (2015). (Dis)Empowering New Immigrants and Refugees Through Their Participation in Introduction Programs in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 13 (3), 245-264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2015.1045054>
- Forde, S.D., Lee, D.S, Mills, C, & Frisby, W. (2015). Moving towards social inclusion: Manager and staff perspectives on an award winning community sport and recreation program for immigrants. *Sport Management Review*, 18 (2015), 126–138. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.02.002>
- Fredriksson, I., Geidne, S. & Eriksson, C. (2018). Leisure-time youth centers as health-promoting settings: experiences from multicultural neighborhoods in Sweden. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 46 (20), 72–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494817743900>
- Fundberg, J. (2012). En kunskapsöversikt om idrott och etnicitet [A knowledge review of sport and ethnicity]. In: *Vem platsar i laget? En antologi om idrott och etnisk mångfald. [Who plays in the team? An anthology on sport and ethnic diversity]*. Stockholm: SISU Idrottsböcker.
- Graneheim, U.H. & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, 24, 105–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001>
- Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1981). *Effective Evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Higgins, V., & Dale, A. (2013). Ethnic differences in sports participation in England. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 10 (3), 215–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2013.11687920>
- Hertting, K. & Karlefors, I. (2013). Sport as a Context for Integration: Newly Arrived Immigrant Children in Sweden Drawing Sporting Experiences. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3 (18), 35–43.
- International Organization for Migration (2014). *A New Global Partnership for Development: Factoring in the Contribution of Migration*. Geneva: IOM.
- Lee, Y-S., & Funk, D.C. (2011). Recreational sport participation and migrants’ acculturation. *Managing Leisure*, 16 (1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13606719.2011.532595>
- Kelly, L. (2010). ‘Social inclusion’ through sports-based interventions? *Critical Social Policy*, 31 (1), 126–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018310385442>
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lundkvist, E., Wagnsson, S., Davis, L., & Ivarsson, A. (2020) Integration of immigrant youth in Sweden: does sport participation really have an impact? *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25 (1), 891-906. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2020.1775099>

- Makarova, E & Herzog, W. (2014). Sport as a means of immigrant youth integration: an empirical study of sports, intercultural relations, and immigrant youth integration in Switzerland. *Sportwiss*, 2014 (44), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12662-013-0321-9>
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Morgan, H. & Costas Batlle, I. (2019). “It’s borderline hypocrisy”: Recruitment practices in youth sport-based interventions. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 7 (13), 1–14.
- O’Driscoll, T., Banting, L.K., Borkoles, E., Eime, R., & Polman, R. (2014) A Systematic Literature Review of Sport and Physical Activity Participation in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Migrant Populations. *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health*, 16, 515–530. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-013-9857-x>
- Østerlund, K., & Seippel, Ø. (2013). Does Membership in Civil Society Organizations Foster Social Integration? The Case of Danish Voluntary Sport Organizations, *Journal of Civil Society*, 9 (4), 391–413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2013.847548>
- Palmer, C. (2009). Soccer and the politics of identity for young Muslim refugee women in South Australia, *Soccer & Society*, 10 (1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970802472643>
- Penninx, R. and Garcés-Mascreñas, B. (2016). The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept. In R. Penninx & B. Garcés-Mascreñas (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe. Contexts, Levels and Actors*. IMISCOE Research Series. London: Springer Open.
- Polit, D.F. & Beck, C.T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 47, 1451–1458. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004>
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R.G. (2001). *Legacies: the story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley: London.
- Ryba, T.V., Schinke, R.J., Stambulova, N.B., & Elbe, A-M. (2017). ISSP position stand: Transnationalism, mobility, and acculturation in and through sport. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 2017, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2017.1280836>
- Schinke, R. J., McGannon, K. R., Battochio, R. C., & Wells, G. D. (2013). Acculturation in elite sport: a thematic analysis of immigrant athletes and coaches. *Journal of sports sciences*, 31 (15), 1676–1686. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2013.794949>
- Schmidke, O. (2018). The Civil Society Dynamic of Including and Empowering Refugees in Canada’s Urban Centres. *Social Inclusion*, 6 (1), 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v6i1.1306>
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. London: SAGE.
- Spaaij, R. (2012). Beyond the playing field: Experiences of sport, social capital, and integration among Somalis in Australia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35 (9), 1519–1538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.592205>
- Spaaij, R., & Jeanes, R. (2013). Education for social change? A Freirean critique of sport for development and peace. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 18 (4), 442–457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2012.690378>
- Spaij, R., Broerse, J., Oxford, S., Luguetti, C., McLachlan, F., McDonald, B., Klepac, B., Lymbery, L., Bishara, J., & Pankowiak, A. (2019). Sport, Refugees and Forced Migration: A Critical Review of the Literature. *Frontiers in Sport and Active Living*, 1, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2019.00047>
- Strandbu, Å. (2005). Identity, embodied culture and physical exercise: Stories from Muslim girls in Oslo with immigrant backgrounds. *Young*, 13, 27–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308805048751>
- Swedish Sports Confederation (2009). *Idrotten vill. Idrottsrörelsens idéprogram*. [Sports wants. Sports policy program]. Stockholm: Swedish Sports Confederation.
- Swedish Sports Confederation (2017). *Idrotten i siffror* [Sports in numbers]. Stockholm: Swedish Sports Confederation. www.rf.se Accessed 19 Nov 2019.
- Swedish Sports Confederation (2019). *Är det skillnad på integration och inkludering?* [Is there a difference between integration and inclusion]. www.rf.se Accessed 19 Nov 2019.
- Thedin Jakobsson, B., Lundvall, S., Redelius, K., & Engström, L-M. (2012). Almost all start but who continue? A longitudinal study of youth participation in Swedish club sports. *European Physical Education Review*, 18 (1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X11430660>
- Toftegard Stöckel, J., Strandbu, Å., Solenes, O., Jørgensen, P. & Fransson, K. (2010). Sport for children and youth in the Scandinavian countries. *Sport in Society*, 13 (4): 625–642. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430431003616332>
- UNHCR. (2020). *Figures at glance*. <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>. Accessed 30 May 2020.
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 15, 398–405. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048>

- Vandermeerschen, H., Vos, S., & Scheerder, J. (2015) Who's joining the club? Participation of socially vulnerable children and adolescents in club-organised sports. *Sport, Education and Society*, 20 (8), 941–958. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2013.856293>
- Verhagen, S., & Boonstra, N. (2014). Bridging social capital through sports: an explorative study on (improving) inter-ethnic contact at two soccer clubs in the Netherlands. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 23 (4), 23–38. <http://doi.org/10.18352/jsi.423>
- Walseth, K. (2008). Bridging and bonding – experiences of young women with an immigrant background, *Sport, Education and Society*, 13 (1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573320701780498>
- Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. (2004). Sport as Means of Integrating Minority Women. *Sport in society: Cultures, commerce, media, politics*. 7 (1), 109–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461098042000220218>
- Ward, C. & Geeraert, N. (2016). Advancing acculturation theory and research: the acculturation process in its ecological context. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 2016 (8), 98–104. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.09.021>
- Whittenmore, R., Chase, S.K. & Mandle, C.L. (2001). Validity in qualitative research, *Qualitative Health Research*, 11 (4), 522–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973201129119299>
- Yin, R.K. (1994). *Case study research: design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zacheus, T. (2010). The significance of sport and physical activity during the acculturation and integration process of immigrants in Finland – the experts' view, *European Journal of Sports and Society*, 7 (2), 155–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2010.11687853>
- Zhou, M. & Kim, S. S. (2006). Community Forces, Social Capital, and Educational Achievement: The Case of Supplementary Education in the Chinese and Korean Immigrant Communities. *Harvard Educational Review*: 76 (1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.76.1.u08t548554882477>



Exploring the Contribution of Personal Qualities to the Personal and Professional Development of Trainee Sport Psychology Practitioners' Within the Individuation Process

Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

Daryl Verner*^{1 A-E}, Charlotte Chandler^{2 ACDE} ,
Philip Clarke^{2 ACDE} 

¹ University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

² University of Derby, Derby, UK

Received: 08.06.2021

Accepted: 22.09.2021

***Correspondence:** Daryl Verner, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, United Kingdom; email: DVPsychology365@gmail.com

Abstract

Since the person behind the practitioner has been recognised as a core foundation of professional practice in sport psychology, research attention has diffused to focus on navigating the 'rocky road' towards individuation. As such, this study extended the literature by illuminating the importance of developing personal qualities during the embryonic stages of supervised experience (SE) in sport psychology to help support the individuation process occurring throughout the training journey. Specifically, the aim of the current study was to explore the contribution of personal qualities to the personal and professional development of trainee sport psychology practitioners, within the individuation process. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with probationary sport and exercise scientists (psychology) working in a range of elite and professional sports (i.e., premier league football, rugby league, golf, gymnastics, swimming, and several other Olympic sports). The interview schedule was refined following a pilot study. Interview transcripts were content analysed and trustworthiness criteria applied. Interpretative phenomenological analysis identified three main superordinate themes, labelled 'self-development of personal qualities', 'facilitators of supervisee individuation', and 'initial consulting experiences of practitioners'. This study extends the literature by illuminating the importance of developing personal qualities during the embryonic stages of SE to help support the individuation process occurring throughout the training journey, thus better preparing sport psychologist's for self-governed practice once accredited. Considerations are given in relation to how sport psychology education and training programmes could aid the individuation process via the development of personal qualities.

Keywords: Personal qualities, individuation, professional effectiveness

Introduction

Within the counselling literature, debate perfused regarding key factors influencing the therapeutic process such as the person behind the therapist and theoretical orientation and training (Ciorbea & Nedelcea, 2012; Heinonen et al., 2012). Consequently, the development of the person within the counselling profession is recognised as an essential aim during training so that the 'self' can be used effectively during therapy (Länge, 2003). This position is echoed by Cain (2007), who illuminates the importance of a practitioner using oneself as a therapeutic tool to foster a relational atmosphere that facilitates a client's ability to learn from both personal and professional

experiences. However, this requires rigorous self-examination on the therapist's behalf to become aware of their personal qualities.

Corey (2009) considers the personal qualities of a therapist to play a significant role in the development of effective therapeutic relationships and dictate the quality of therapeutic outcomes. Considering the similarities between the counselling and sport psychology professions (Katz & Hemmings, 2009), such discussions have also diffused into the sport psychology literature with suggestions that personal quality awareness amongst sport psychologists contribute to their effectiveness (Chandler et al., 2016; 2014; Nesti, 2010). Indeed, since the sport psychologist has been recognised as the primary consulting 'tool' (Tod & Andersen, 2005), it appears necessary to extend the personal qualities literature. Conceptually, Chandler and colleagues (2014) propose that, in applied practice, personal qualities represent a tangible embodiment of a practitioner's core self and relates to a person's morals, values, virtues and beliefs. The significance of this tangible embodiment of beliefs is captured within the hierarchical model of professional philosophy (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004), which adopts a bottom-up approach whereby the foundation of a practitioner's personal core beliefs and values systematically informs, and is interdependently linked with, the less fundamental layers of theoretical paradigm, model of practice and consultant role, intervention goals, and intervention techniques. This position therefore reinforces the individuality of the person behind the practitioner as the core foundation of practice (Chandler et al., 2016).

Although the literature has provided some evidence regarding the characteristics of effective sport psychologists (Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Lubker et al., 2008; Orlick & Partington, 1987), only a paucity of research exists examining the personal qualities of effective sport psychologists and how they impact practice (Chandler et al., 2016; Nesti, 2010). In their study of sport physicians, Chandler and colleagues (2014) found empathy was considered a prerequisite to effective sport psychology practice and that it facilitates the relationship building process with athletes. The importance of empathy is pervasive within the counselling profession as it is identified as one of the key conditions necessary and sufficient for therapeutic change (Rogers, 1957). In addition to empathy, personal qualities such as integrity, humility, courage, resilience, and authenticity have been recognised as being of paramount importance to the effectiveness of sport psychologists (Chandler et al., 2016; Friesen & Orlick, 2010). For example, due to the day-to-day challenges associated with working in high level sport (i.e., handling sensitive information, being a part of and apart from the team) and the potential for termination of position at any time, resilience has been recommended as an important personal quality for sport psychologists to possess (Chandler et al., 2016). Similarly, Friesen and Orlick (2010) acknowledged the benefits of knowing and accepting thyself as a human-being and bringing this 'real' self into professional practice. For Friesen and Orlick (2010), when operating authentically with clients, practitioners are liberated and free to express who they are which helps elicit a degree of humility within the practitioner and serves to enhance the therapeutic relationship.

Unfortunately, it is acknowledged within the literature that neophyte sport psychology practitioners may initially lack an explicit awareness of their personal qualities, stemming from education's emphasis on traditional cognitive-behavioural methods (Rowley, Earle, & Gilbourne, 2012). For instance, in a longitudinal study Tod and Bond (2010) revealed how one neophyte practitioner, 'Anna', initially approached service-delivery from a prescriptive mental skills approach as a result of her educational experiences. Over time, however, Anna's theoretical orientation and self-awareness broadened, and she began practicing in a manner that was congruent with her professional philosophy. This bears resemblance to the individuation process outlined by Rønnestad and Skovholt (2013) in their counsellor development framework. Individuation represents a dynamic process in which practitioners aim to achieve a level of coherence between the practitioner (i.e., the values, beliefs, personal qualities) and professional identity (i.e., theoretical orientation, service-delivery style) (McEwan, Tod, & Eubank, 2019). Tod, Hutter and Eubank (2017) describe individuation as a process whereby a practitioner negotiates a 'fit' between who they are and the environment they are working within. The authors also recognize how people and environments can change, and individuation is therefore "a dynamic ongoing process as practitioners strive to achieve professional satisfaction and meaning" (Tod et al., 2017, p. 135). This notion of achieving a 'fit' is similar to that of congruence, which has been discussed to some extent within the sport psychology literature, and extensively so in counselling psychology literature. Therefore, to achieve this 'fit', sport psychologists will be required to navigate the rocky road to individuation and authenticity as part of their developmental journey. It would therefore appear beneficial to consider how practitioners' personal qualities and self-awareness can facilitate the individuation process.

Although the literature is replete with research examining the early development of neophyte sport psychologists (Johnson & Andersen, 2019; Martin, Winter, & Holder, 2017; Collins, Evan-Jones, & O'Connor, 2013), no study to date, to the authors knowledge, has examined the personal qualities of trainees and how they are developed throughout the early stages of their training journey. This study builds on previous research in this area and provides

valuable insight into the development of trainee sport psychology practitioners. The aim of the current study was to explore the contribution of personal qualities to the personal and professional development of trainee sport psychology practitioners, within the individuation process.

Method

Philosophical underpinnings

The current study employed an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) to explore the development of neophyte sport psychology practitioners' personal qualities during SE from the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). IPA provides an inductive and experiential approach to research (Smith, 2004), and has its philosophical underpinnings embedded within phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013). In this study, IPA was selected as it is "...especially useful when one is concerned with complexity, process or novelty" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.53). Likewise, due to the inductive nature of IPA (Smith, 2004), it was purported to provide a more nuanced account of neophytes training journeys. As such, researcher reflexivity was considered an essential aspect of the research since the researcher was involved throughout the whole research process (Smith et al., 2013).

Participants

Smith and Shinebourne (2012) contend that IPA studies typically benefit from an intensive focus on a small number of participants. As such, a sample of seven probationary sport and exercise scientists (six females and one male), who were currently undertaking BASES SE (psychology) were purposively sampled and provided their informed consent for participation in the study. Participants worked within a range of elite sports (e.g., Premier League football, Premiership rugby, PGA golf, and several other Olympic sports). All participants had completed a Master's level degree in sport psychology and some ($n=3$) were doctoral students at different stages in their study. To ensure that the research questions were relevant, participants must have been registered on to BASES SE for a minimum of six months.

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to refine the interview process (Malmqvist et al., 2019), improve researcher confidence (McLeod, 2011), and enhance the credibility of the study (Padgett, 2008). Two medical students were selected for pilot due to the challenges associated with recruiting BASES supervisees and based on the assertion that the medical and sport psychology professions share parallels with one another (Chandler et al., 2014). Feedback from pilot interviews resulted in alterations to extend the interview time from 60 to 90 minutes and to rephrase certain questions for clarity.

Instrument

Qualitative face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to provide an interpretive insight into neophyte practitioners' experiences of BASES SE. The interview schedule was developed following discussions with research team, the primary authors BASES supervisor, piloting and reviews of previous sport psychologist effectiveness and personal qualities literature (Chandler et al., 2014; Orlick & Partington, 1987), with content adapted to address the aim of the study. The interview schedule ensured that the same systematic and comprehensive lines of inquiry were followed for each participant interviewed. A copy of the interview schedule can be accessed in the supplementary material.

Procedure

Following ethical approval, potential participants were contacted via email from BASES for interested participants and subsequently, by the primary researcher. Snowball sampling techniques were also employed due to the challenges associated with recruitment (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015). The seven participants were interviewed in person or via Skype at a location and time that was suitable to them. Each participant was provided with the interview schedule and participant information sheet in advance, which detailed the interview questions and procedure and informed them that the data would be kept confidential, and of their right to withdraw. Once the interviews were complete, participants were provided with an opportunity to ask questions, debriefed, and thanked for their time. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Data analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim, reviewed for grammatical accuracy, and re-read for familiarity by the primary author. Transcripts yielded 114 pages of 1.5 spaced interview data. The data was then analysed using IPA which included the following elements: (a) transfer from what is unique to a participant to what is collective among the participants, (b) description of the experience which is subsequently followed by an interpretation of the experience, (c) commitment to understanding the participant's perspective, and (d) psychological emphasis on personal meaning-making within a specific context (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012). As such, the current study adopted Smith and colleagues' (2009) 7-stage data analysis guidelines to aid the IPA process. Stage 1 required the first author to become immersed in the original data through reading and re-reading each transcript and then making initial notes, thoughts and comments as per stage 2. These notes allowed the first author to identify key phrases and insight relevant to the research question, thus allowing for chunks of data to be grouped based on similarities (stage 3). For example, data regarding the importance of personal qualities for practitioner effectiveness were grouped, as was data related to personal qualities and how awareness of these can support the individuation process. Connections were then made between these emergent themes (stage 4) and key themes began to form. Throughout this process, a focus on the individual nature of each practitioner's experience was maintained as per stages 5 and 6, through the selection of extracts that represented unique applied experiences as shared within interviews. For example, whilst all practitioners referred to personal qualities and their development, their individuation processes were unique, and their practice environments varied. Deeper interpretation of data (stage 7) is represented within the results and subsequent discussion of data. Any disagreements were resolved via discussion within the study team until a collective consensus could be achieved and, when necessary, audiotapes were listened to again for clarity. A final rereading of all transcripts was performed to ensure all identified themes were grounded in the data.

Researcher trustworthiness

Several trustworthiness methods were employed to ensure an accurate and rigorous representation of the data (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Firstly, member checking (Birt et al., 2016) was implemented whereby each transcript was sent verbatim, via email, to the respective participant for verification that the content could be analysed and discussed, and with the option of editing or deleting content. All seven participants responded confirming the accuracy of their transcripts. Secondly, analyst triangulation was achieved through frequent meetings between the authors at various stages of data analysis to discuss the findings. This provided a broader perspective from which to develop interpretations of the data and enabled common themes to be established and discussed (Campbell et al., 2013). Thirdly, consistent with the recommendations made by Sparkes (1998), extensive quotations from the participants were included in the results section for readers to deduce for themselves the accuracy and trustworthiness of conclusions. Finally, considering that the lead author was immersed throughout the whole research process as the primary data collection and analysis instrument (Smith et al., 2009), a reflexive journal was kept to record the nature and origin of possible emergent interpretations (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

Results

Based on analysis of transcripts, data representation was orientated around three key superordinate themes. The first key theme emerged around the self-development of personal qualities. The second examined the facilitators of supervisee individuation whilst the third theme explored the initial consulting experiences of supervisees.

Self-development of personal qualities

The supervisees acknowledged the value of developing their personal qualities if they are to be effective during service-delivery. The importance of personal qualities is reflected in the following excerpt: *"I think personal qualities are needed for all disciplines in a way, but I think it is different for sport psychology...because you are the instrument in terms of your personal qualities"*. This quote from supervisee six illuminates how supervisees, even early in their careers, recognise that who they are as a person plays a central role in their effectiveness, particularly within sport psychology. In doing so, this highlights the importance of the individuation process as supervisees learn to negotiate the 'fit' between themselves and their environment. Indeed, one part of negotiating this 'fit' is being self-aware and acting in congruence with one's personal qualities whilst remaining cognisant of what works

within the environment they are operating in. The supervisees described the importance of being yourself during service-delivery:

“I think it is important that you find your own being...who I am as a sport psychologist will differ from who you are as a sport psychologist, and we are our own people, and we can't all be robots and be the same people because that is not going to work.”

This quote from supervisee four highlights the importance of individuality and the need for supervisees to discover the essence of who they are. This position was echoed by supervisees throughout, for example by supervisee five who stated *“I think when you are working with people then you need to be yourself and I think that is how you build rapport naturally.”* Such quotes highlight the benefits of practitioners practicing authentically and using oneself as an instrument to establish ‘real’ connections with athletes. The supervisees also suggested that the individuation process, specifically involving their development of self-awareness and personal qualities, is important in learning when to challenge others and address conflict. This assertion is best reflected in the following by trainee seven:

“I think that security in myself...before I would have been so keen to impress and so keen to need to prove myself...I would have done everything I can to protect myself...whereas yesterday empathy came into it because I thought wow he is in a really difficult position ...he has thrown me under the bus and that is not like him and he probably didn't mean to so what can I do to help him rather than just be a bit shit back to him.”

Trainees also identified a desire to take responsibility for their self-development and what is ‘right’ over what is expedient. This was best reflected in the following extracts from two supervisees:

“You can't measure psychology and the impact of it, and you are actually thinking am I doing anything here am I progressing the club or progressing the player and I think you have got to one, believe in yourself and to have flexibility” (supervisee 3)

“The ability to understand that you are not always going to know everything about every sport and it's kind of ok to say that I don't understand that much about the sport, but I understand what I am talking about psychology wise so maybe we can work together and learn from each other? So, I think honesty is important” (supervisee 5)

These quotes from participants highlight the importance of the individuation process whereby supervisees endeavour to find a personalised method of working that reflects where they are at in their developmental journey (McEwan et al., 2019). For example, being comfortable to admit a lack of knowledge in a sport or on a topic requires honesty, authenticity and courage, and these quotes therefore reinforce the importance of personal quality awareness in facilitating a supervisee's journey towards individuation. Trainees also identified the importance of knowing how and when to apply these personal qualities in the ‘real world’ in terms of being *“ready to be challenged”* and dealing with the unexpected:

“I ended up walking around the training ground with him for a couple of hours at least and we spoke about a million different things that I never ever would have expected and none of that was based on theory, all of that was just based on what came to my mind.”

This excerpt from supervisee seven suggests that whilst acquiring a comprehensive knowledge base is of importance to applied practitioners, this is not always sufficient in practice; and practitioners also need to rely on their personal qualities to communicate sensitively with athletes. Similarly, these excerpts highlight supervisees' commitment towards remaining authentic during service-delivery and thus implicates personal quality awareness as contributing to individuation.

Facilitators of supervisee individuation

The supervisees recognised a variety of key elements such as reflective practice, peer support, life experience, and the role of the supervisor as facilitating supervisee growth and thus their individuation process. Supervisees emphasised the value of reflective practice:

“Even just the process of reflecting on what you have learnt is helping you develop in itself but having that structure and having a more formal way of doing it definitely helps...it actually helps you realise which qualities are important and which are going to help you, and then you can sort of develop those and try and shape your experiences to help those.”

This extract from trainee one suggests that supervisees recognise the formalised structure of reflective practice as a professional tool to aid their development. Specifically, this quote highlights the role of reflection in facilitating the relationship between personal qualities and experiences, and the confidence this engenders within supervisees as a consequence of increased self-awareness. Peer interaction was another component acknowledged to facilitate individuation:

“I think that my supervisor has only ever really been my support and actually I think I need more than that...I need other peers to help me learn about new stuff that I haven’t heard of. When other people say something, you really listen to it and think actually that is a good point and I do need to be more empathetic” (supervisee 2)

This excerpt from supervisee two highlights the importance of developing a community of practice throughout one’s professional journey and demonstrates the contribution of peers in supporting development in ways different to that of supervisors. Peers are presented as an important source of support; interactions between trainee practitioners can promote personal quality awareness by encouraging a supervisee to direct their attention introspectively toward the qualities that require development. The supervisees further identified the role of life experience in their personal development, which ultimately informs their individuation as a practitioner:

“I think it is something to do with your upbringing, because I don’t think you are being true to yourself or you are not being authentic if you are not being yourself in sport...I think outside of sport some bad things happen and it helps you become more resilient for life in sport, and it helps you become more aware in terms of what you are doing, and your personal qualities in terms of how you are doing it, and how you treat others with respect, and I think that they all influence you as a person.”

This quote from supervisee six suggests that supervisees’ personal and professional selves are intertwined and symbiotic, with each influencing the other’s development. Supervisees should be cognisant of their personal life experiences and understand how these may develop their personal qualities, which in turn can facilitate individuation as a practitioner. Specifically, it could be construed that personal life experiences help shape individuals and that supervisees should remain true to their ‘real’ self during professional practice. It is evident that a relationship exists between personal life experience, personal qualities, and individuation and as such, reflective practice offers neophyte practitioners the opportunity to develop self-awareness through consideration of life experiences and how they have impacted them as a person and therefore as a practitioner. One supervisee also acknowledged the importance of their supervisor in supporting their development of personal qualities and facilitating the individuation process:

“I was lucky...[my supervisor] picked [personal qualities] up so they have always kind of driven that so in my reflections they were always picking up...strengths or your qualities but I am lucky in that reflection is their thing so they know the kind of questions to ask.”

Supervisee three elaborated on this when highlighting that receiving positive feedback from their supervisor gives them “confidence to be more courageous”, especially given the self-doubt that developing practitioners may experience. These findings highlight the role of a supervisor in supporting a trainee practitioner’s reflective process by encouraging them to consider personal qualities. Through their questioning and feedback, a supervisor can ensure their supervisee considers not only the external (what they do in practice), but on the internal (the aspects of self that inform practice). Supervisees also provided recommendations to further support their development in a more formalised way. Supervisee six captured this well:

“I know on the competency profile there are personal qualities such as building relationships and understanding different environments, but I don’t actually think that they emphasise it enough and I think if they had a competency as like personal qualities of a practitioner or being yourself as a practitioner then that would really hammer it home and get more people focusing on it.”

Findings overall suggested that supervisees benefitted from a focus on developing personal qualities during their supervised experience, and therefore it appears that a formal requirement to consider this as part of a competency profile would be welcomed.

Initial consulting experiences

The supervisees in the study offered an interesting insight into their initial consulting experiences and the vulnerabilities they encountered as a result of traditional, theory-driven educational practices:

“At the start I stuck with mental skills because it’s what I knew... I think that I am in a place now where I know that I don’t want to do all of the mental skills stuff, but because my education has all been mental skills with a little bit of ‘oh here is these other philosophies and theories’ and it is like oh that is really cool but how?...They are so [significant] how do I know where to start? And how do you apply them?...There is so much out there, and I think I really struggled.”

This quote from supervisee four highlights the initial lack of preparedness that neophytes can experience during the embryonic stages of professional practice due to a lack of exposure to professional philosophy. This supervisee appeared unsure how to develop a professional philosophy and put it into practice, which is now impacting them negatively as they seek to shift their approach. Supervisee six elaborated on this with regards to personal qualities specifically:

“[At University] you are told all this theory of one-to-one support, and you are supposed to show care, and empathy but I think actually when you sit down you are thinking oh my god what am I going to say now? What am I going to say? And you are just sat there, and everyone is expecting you to be an expert, but you don’t know.”

It appears that whilst supervisees may be aware of the importance of personal qualities, such as empathy as highlighted in this example, their understanding of what such qualities ‘look like’ in practice may be lacking. During the early stages of a practitioner’s development, they may not yet have had the opportunity to develop their personal qualities or understanding of their influence on practice. As a result, trainee practitioners may experience a feeling of incongruence and a lack of coherency between their personal and professional selves, preventing individuation. However, supervisees offered examples of how experience helped them to overcome the uncertainty and discomfort associated with incongruence:

“I definitely feel much more confident in my own abilities and my own beliefs...so what I feel is right and my philosophy...I definitely feel much more confident to stick by those...initially you are just desperate to be involved in anything you can in order to get more applied experience whereas now...I would feel a lot happier saying you know what, I don’t agree with the things that are going on and I don’t think that this one is for me.”

This quote from trainee four demonstrates how personal qualities such as authenticity, courage, and integrity have evolved for this supervisee and influenced their practice choices. It captures the dynamic process considered representative of individuation as a trainee practitioner negotiates when appraising who they are and whether they ‘fit’ the environments that they are employed to work in. As such, these findings would appear to suggest that personal quality awareness is integral to the individuation process with regards to finding a comfort within oneself as a person and as a practitioner, which was further emphasized by supervisee one:

“When I started, I was like ‘oh I need to look like I know what I am doing’... can’t be like ‘oh no I don’t know your sport!’ But then as you move through... now I would be quite happy to say... actually I don’t know anything about the sport specifically but I have done a bit of research myself, and I would like to learn from you...I would feel more confident doing that now rather than what I did at the beginning”

This excerpt suggests that over time, supervisees will become more comfortable with accepting what they do not know and take responsibility for seeking learning experiences to address this. This extract also illustrates this supervisee’s development towards a more authentic and secure self, who is humble enough to acknowledge where they can develop and honest in sharing this with others. It therefore appears imperative that experience be actively reflected upon to promote self-awareness, and therefore understood as significantly influencing individuation through personal quality development.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to explore the contribution of personal qualities to the personal and professional development of trainee sport psychology practitioners, within the individuation process. This study has extended the literature by illuminating the importance of developing personal qualities during the embryonic stages of SE to help support the individuation process occurring throughout the training journey (Tod et al., 2017). Indeed, supervisees valued personal qualities, and having an awareness of these, as being paramount in helping them to provide effective sport psychology support by enabling oneself to be used as an instrument of practice within the

consulting process. This position resonates with the extant literature which emphasises the person behind the practitioner as the core foundation of practice (Lindsay et al., 2007; Chandler et al., 2014; Tod et al., 2017).

The supervisees frequently discussed the challenges associated with being both authentic and adaptable within professional environments. Specifically, supervisees acknowledged the difficult balance between ‘fitting in’ and expressing one’s ‘real self’ during professional practice, which reflects the individuation process described by Tod et al. (2017). For the supervisees in this study, part of negotiating this fit necessitated a developing awareness of how they wanted to practice and an associated comfort in saying ‘no’ when necessary. This highlights the importance of developing personal qualities such as authenticity and courage and represents a tangible example of why these are important in applied practice. Chandler and colleagues (2016) support this assertion and argue that it is important for sport psychology practitioners to be highly self-aware of their personal qualities and how they interact within the professional sport environment, particularly when managing conflict and opposition to one’s work. Furthermore, Orlick and Partington (1987) contend that practitioners must consider the impact of both their personal characteristics and the unique sporting environment they are working within if they are to be truly effective. In reflecting on their applied experiences, the practitioners in the current study could provide examples of how the ‘self’ in context became increasingly important to their work, for example in realising the importance of one’s professional philosophy, or when managing the difficulty of demonstrating tangible outcomes resulting from their applied endeavours. As Chandler, Steptoe and Eubank (2020) highlight, a ‘good day at the office’ for a sport psychologist will likely reflect both meeting their role requirements and their personal feelings on impact and effectiveness, despite these potentially being at odds with one another. Practitioners must work to remain congruent, whilst also ‘fitting’ with their environment, and have the “competence and confidence to willingly, pragmatically, and with legitimacy “flex” (not break) their philosophical position” (Chandler et al., 2020, p. 243). Combined with the results of the current study, such literature emphasises the challenging nature of practitioner individuation, and together provide valuable insight into its significance for effective applied practice.

The neophyte practitioners involved in this study also provided valuable insight into how their personal qualities developed as a function of training experiences. Participants demonstrated an awareness of their qualities aligned to their stage of development, acknowledging, for example, an increased humility and integrity in being willing to do the ‘right thing’ rather than what could be considered self-serving. The development of personal qualities throughout the training process can be understood in relation to Rønnestad and Skovholt’s (2013) counsellor development framework, which has been previously employed within the sport psychology trainee development literature (McEwan et al., 2019), and may contribute to the understanding of practitioner development in the sport domain (Tod & Bond, 2010). According to Rønnestad and Skovholt (2013), practitioners advance through six phases: 1) layhelper phase, 2) beginning student phase, 3) advanced student phase, 4) novice professional phase, 5) experienced professional phase, and 6) senior professional phase. In this case, it could be interpreted that the transition between the beginning student and advanced student phases bear resemblance to the SE process. For instance, the beginning student phase is characterised as an exciting yet intensely challenging phase in which neophytes are consumed with anxiety and doubt whether they have the personal qualities, resources, or ability to bridge the theory-practice gap. This was reflected in the current study whereby supervisees acknowledged during their initial consulting experiences that they were inundated with anxiety and self-doubt, lacked awareness of their personal qualities and did not yet fully understand how these qualities may impact on their effective practice. At this stage in their development, it would be appropriate to assume that supervisees may not have had sufficient opportunity in the form of applied experiences to develop an awareness of their personal qualities or how these interacted with their applied environments. Indeed, the participants highlighted the benefit of increasing the focus on personal qualities within the training process.

Additionally, during their early development as practitioners, it could be construed that trainees exhibit “a rigid adherence to taught rules” (Eraut, 1994, p.124), which may be informed by what students will typically be taught on educational programmes within the discipline, namely a cognitive-behavioural approach to sport psychology (Holt & Streat, 2001). This was implicated within the present study; supervisees reported focusing solely on mental skills training despite the incongruence they were experiencing resulting from their lack of authenticity during service-delivery. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2013) support this position and suggest that students often suppress their beliefs about helping in favour of ways that seem more professional, and therefore operate in rigid and inflexible ways. Tod and Lavalley (2011) also argue that current sport psychology training provision may not permit neophytes to develop necessary relationship building skills (i.e., empathy) to provide athlete-centred services. The current study extends this understanding by highlighting that there are additional aspects of applied practice that training may not

adequately prepare neophytes for, such as developing and implementing their professional philosophy or how and when to say 'no'. Therefore, an increased emphasis on self, and one's beliefs, values, and personal qualities, would be beneficial during supervisee training and support the individuation process, thus better preparing them for self-governed practice once accredited.

Based on the findings from this study, it appears pertinent to offer some practical implications for the profession with regards to the education and training of sport psychology practitioners. Specifically, the supervisees acknowledged that their personal qualities and professional knowledge operate symbiotically in professional practice and that a deficiency in either would negatively impact upon the effectiveness of one's practice. Ladany (2007) supports this position and advocates for training programs to promote both the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and skills and opportunities for personal development. Therefore, perhaps future discussions should emerge within training programs as to how they are fostering these personal qualities amongst supervisees and preparing them for the arduous nature of professional sport (Nesti, 2004). In addition, given the similarities to the counselling psychology profession (Katz & Hemmings, 2009), sport psychology training pathways could learn from their training pathways which focus on the evolution of practitioners across the entire development process in relation to both self and contextual knowledge (McEwan et al., 2019; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013). In doing so, this may permit supervisees to learn about both their 'self' and their 'self in context', understand how they relate to others (Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2010), and become more cognisant of how their personal qualities are integral to the individuation process and professional effectiveness (Tod et al., 2017).

Data from the current study also highlighted supervisors as key in supporting a trainee's individuation process. The trainees suggested that a supervisor who challenges them to consider their personal qualities and how these impact on applied practice is of significant value to their development and provides a safe and supportive space within which to (constructively) question their 'self' in practice. Chandler and McEwan (2019) have presented several ways in which a supervisor can support a trainee through their developmental journey, for example by encouraging them to reflect on who they are and their motivations for applied practice. In doing so, the supervisory relationship can act as a 'prototype' for guiding the supervisee's future client relationships and their understanding of self in relation to others. Given the position that current training may not provide trainees with the necessary opportunities to develop important client-centred skills (Tod & Lavalley, 2011), this represents one way in which the trainee can be prepared for practice in line with current participants' perspectives. The supervision environment is also important in the supervisee feeling that they can safely express themselves as a person whilst the supervisor also promotes a focus on the contextual aspects of applied sport psychology practice (Chandler & McEwan, 2019). This represents a tangible suggestion for how the supervisor can support a trainee's individuation process, and the current study emphasises the need for a focus on personal qualities within this supervision.

It is also important, however, that trainees have the opportunity to learn from a variety of sources in addition to their supervisor, and participants from the current study emphasised the importance of their own reflective practice, and support from peers, in their development. For example, supervisees highlighted reflective practice as a professional tool that supports one's journey of self-discovery and personal quality awareness, by exploring one's upbringing and challenges experienced in one's personal life. McEwan et al. (2019) support this assertion and purport that reflections on critical life events may aid the individuation process and subsequently one's professional practice. Supervisees also recognised the importance of developing a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and how peers can contribute, for example, through discussions that offer 'food for thought' and stimulate self-reflection. Owton and colleagues (2014) support this position and revealed that the applied experiences of one trainee may act as a catalyst that stimulates awareness in other trainees regarding professional challenges that they are likely to encounter. Of utmost importance, is that applied practitioners can develop an understanding of their effectiveness and make use of a variety of sources to inform this, especially given the notion of the practitioner as the tool (Tod & Andersen, 2005). This can be a challenge for less experienced practitioners, yet utilising supervisors, peers and in particular reflective practice to consider one's personal qualities and how they interact with working environments are key recommendations to support a practitioner's development and what effectiveness looks like for them (Chandler et al., 2020). This exposure to professional others may also help mitigate against creating 'mini-me' supervisors which is paramount when considering that the individuation process is about one's individual identity. Therefore, exposing oneself to a variety of others with different ideas is important to understand what does and does not work for supervisees. Tod and colleagues (2017) support this position and suggest that knowing who we are *not*, is just as helpful as knowing who we are.

Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to explore the contribution of personal qualities to the personal and professional development of trainee sport psychology practitioners, within the individuation process. This study adds to the relatively limited literature in sport psychology development literature pertaining to the individuation process and acknowledges the importance of developing the personal qualities of neophytes to support this process. These findings also support and extend previous counselling and sport psychology literature, and implore the development of both the trainee as a person and also as a professional in order to be truly effective. Likewise, this study identified a number of key methods to facilitate personal quality awareness which may further aid the individuation process. However, due to the small number of participants recruited the findings may not be fully representative of the UK sport psychology supervisees and should be interpreted with caution. Further, these findings are specific to supervisees registered onto BASES SE and future research could explore these findings from the perspective of other training routes (i.e., British Psychological Society) to help enrich the personal qualities and individuation literature. Additionally, a longitudinal study comprising the length of SE would appear to be beneficial in elucidating our understanding of how personal qualities are developed and how this impacts the individuation process. In summary, the findings from this study have illuminated the importance of developing personal qualities during the embryonic stages of SE to help support the individuation process and ultimately, professional effectiveness.

References

- Biggerstaff, D. L. & Thompson, A. R. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A qualitative methodology of choice in healthcare research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 5(3), 214-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880802314304>
- Cain, D. J., (2007). What Every Therapist Should Know, Be, and Do: Contributions from Humanistic Psychotherapies. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 37(1), 3-10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10879-006-9028-7>
- Chandler, C., Eubank, M., Nesti, M., & Cable, T. (2014). Personal qualities of effective sport psychologists: A sports physician perspective. *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*, 61(1), 28-38. <https://doi.org/10.2478/pcssr-2014-0003>
- Chandler, C., Eubank, M., Nesti, M., Tod, D., & Cable, T. (2016). Personal qualities of effective Sport Psychologists: Coping with organisational demands in high performance sport. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 47(4), 297-317. <http://doi:10.7352/IJSP.2016.47.297>
- Chandler, C., & McEwan, H. (2019, December). Exploring supervisory relationships in sport and exercise, and health psychology and their impact on practitioner development. In D. Tod (Chair), *Sport and Exercise Psychologist Training: The Professional Development and Training Network*. Symposium conducted at the Division of Sport & Exercise Psychology Annual Conference 2019.
- Chandler, C., Steptoe, K., & Eubank, M. (2020). Assessing the Impact of Psychology Provision in Elite Youth Soccer. In J. Dixon, J. Barker, R. Thelwell, & I. Mitchell (Eds.). *The Psychology of Soccer*. Routledge, UK.
- Ciorbea, I., & Nedelcea, C. (2012). The Theoretical Orientation Shapes the Personality of the Psychotherapist? *Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 46, 495-503. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.149>
- Collins, R., Evans-Jones, K., & O'Connor, H. L. (2013). Reflections on three neophyte sport and exercise psychologists' developing philosophies for practice. *The Sport Psychologist*, 27(4), 399-409. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.27.4.399>
- Cooper, R., Fleischer, A., & Cotton, F. A. (2012). Building Connections: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Qualitative Research Students' Learning Experiences. *Qualitative Report*, 17(17), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1780>
- Corey, G. (2009). *Theory and practice of counselling & psychotherapy*. Eighth Edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- Cropley, B., Miles, A., Hanton, S., & Niven, A. (2007). Improving the delivery of applied sport psychology support through reflective practice. *The Sport Psychologist*, 21(4), 475-494. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/tsp.21.4.475>
- Ellard-Gray, A., Jeffrey, N. K., Choubak, M., & Crann, S. E. (2015). Finding the hidden participant: Solutions for recruiting hidden, hard-to-reach, and vulnerable populations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915621420>
- Eraut, M. (1994) *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. London: Routledge.

- Fifer, A., Henschen, K., Gould, D., & Ravizza, K. (2008). What works when working with athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 22(3), 356-377.
- Friesen, A., & Orlick, T. (2010). A qualitative analysis of holistic sport psychology consultants' professional philosophies. *The Sport Psychologist*, 24(2), 227-244. <http://doi:10.1123/tsp.24.2.227>
- Heinonen, E., Lindfors, O., Laaksonen, M. A., & Knekt, P. (2012). Therapists' professional and personal characteristics as predictors of outcome in short – and long-term psychotherapy. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 138(3), 301–312. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2012.01.023>
- Holt, N. L., & Strean, W. B. (2001). Reflecting on initiating sport psychology consultation: A self-narrative of neophyte practice. *Sport Psychologist*, 15(2), 188-204.
- Johnson, U., & Andersen, M. (2019). On the Swedish Road to Becoming a Professional Practitioner in Sport and Exercise Psychology: Students' Views, Hopes, Dreams, and Worries. *Sport Psychologist*, 33(1), 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2017-0137>
- Katz, J., & Hemmings, B. (2009). *Counselling Skills Handbook for the Sport Psychologist*. Leicester: The British Psychological Society.
- Ladany, N. (2007). Does psychotherapy training matter? Maybe not. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 44(4), 392–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.44.4.392>
- Längle, A. (2003). The art of involving the person—The existential fundamental motivations as structure of the motivational process. *European Psychotherapy*, 4(1), 25–36.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindsay, P., Breckon, J. D., Thomas, O., & Maynard, I. W. (2007). In pursuit of congruence: A personal reflection on methods and philosophy in applied practice. *The Sport Psychologist*, 21(3), 335-352.
- Lubker, J. R., Visek, A. J., Geer, J. R., & Watson, J. C. (2008). Characteristics of an effective sport psychology consultant: Perspectives from athletes and consultants. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 31(2), 147–165.
- Malmqvist, J., Hellberg, K., Möllås, G., Rose, R., & Shevlin, M. (2019). Conducting the pilot study: A neglected part of the research process? Methodological findings supporting the importance of piloting in qualitative research studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919878341>
- Martin, E. A., Winter, S., & Holder, T. (2017). An exploration of trainee practitioners' experiences when using observation. *The Sport Psychologist*, 31(2), 160-172. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2016-0019>
- McEwan, H. E., & Tod, D. (2015). Learning Experiences Contributing to Service-Delivery Competence in Applied Psychologists: Lessons for Sport Psychologists. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 27(1), 79-93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2014.952460>
- McEwan, H. E., Tod, D., & Eubank, M. (2019). The rocky road to individuation: Sport psychologists' perspectives on professional development. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 45, 101542. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.101542>
- McLeod, J. (2011). *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Second Edition. London: SAGE.
- Nesti, M. (2004). *Existential Psychology and Sport: Implications for Research and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Nesti, M. (2010). *Psychology in Football: Working with Elite and Professional Players*. London: Routledge.
- Orlick, T., & Partington, J. (1987). The sport psychology consultant: Analysis of critical components as viewed by Canadian Olympic athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 1(1), 4-17.
- Owton, H., Bond, K., & Tod, D. (2014). “It’s My Dream to Work with Olympic Athletes”: Neophyte Sport Psychologists’ Expectations and Initial Experiences Regarding Service Delivery. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 26(3), 241-255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2013.847509>
- Padgett, Deborah K. (2008) *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research*, 2nd edn. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Third Edition. Sage: London.
- Poczwardowski, A., Sherman, C. P., & Ravizza, K. (2004). Professional philosophy in the sport psychology service delivery: Building on theory and practice. *The Sport Psychologist*, 18(4), 445-463.
- Rogers, C. R. (1957). The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21(2), 95-103. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045357>
- Rowley, C., Earle, K., & Gilbourne, D. (2012). Practice and the process of critical learning: Reflections of an early-stage practitioner working in elite youth level rugby league. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review*, 8(2), 35-50.
- Rønnestad, M. H., & Skovholt, T. M. (2013). *The developing practitioner: Growth and stagnation of therapists and counselors*. Routledge.

- Sharp, L., & Hodge, K. (2011). Sport psychology consulting effectiveness: The sport psychology consultant's perspective. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 23(3), 360-376. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2011.583619>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75. <https://content.iospress.com/articles/education-for-information/efi00778>
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to methods* (2nd ed., pp. 53-80). London: Sage.
- Smith, J. A., & Shinebourne, P. (2012). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. American Psychological Association.
- Smith, J. A., Flower, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London: Sage.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2013). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method, and research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1(1), 39-54.
- Sparkes, A. C. (1998). Athletic identity: An Achilles' heel to the survival of self. *Qualitative health research*, 8(5), 644-664. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239800800506>
- Stoltenberg, C. D., & McNeil, W. (2010). *IDM supervision: An integrative development model for supervising counselors and therapists* (3rd Ed.). Hove, UK: Routledge.
- Tod, D., & Andersen, M. (2005). Success in Sport Psych: Effective Sport Psychologists. In S. Murphy (Ed.). *The Sport Psych Handbook* (pp. 303-312). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Tod, D., & Bond, K. (2010). A longitudinal examination of a British neophyte sport psychologist's development. *The Sport Psychologist*, 24(1), 35-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200802593604>
- Tod, D., & Lavalley, D. (2011). Taming the wild west: Training and supervision in applied sport psychology. In D. Gilbourne & M.B. Andersen (Eds.), *Critical essays in applied sport psychology* (pp. 193-215). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Tod, D., Hutter, R. V., & Eubank, M. (2017). Professional development for sport psychology practice. *Current opinion in psychology*, 16, 134-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200802593604>

This is Open Access article distributed under the terms of CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License.



Motives for Participating in Sports Events Volunteering in Poland

Joanna Bańbuła^{*1A-E} 

¹*Department of Management, Organization and Economics, Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education, Warsaw, Poland*

Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

Received: 11.10.2021

Accepted: 09.11.2021

***Correspondence:** Joanna Bańbuła, ul. Marymoncka 34, 00-968 Warszawa; email: joanna.banbula@awf.edu.pl

Abstract

In following paper, based on Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory model, author wants to investigate which group of factors is the most and least important motive for participation in sports events volunteering in Poland for the study group. Data were collected in cooperation with two leading Academic Sports Federation – AZS Warszawa, AZS Kraków. 87 sports volunteers took part in the online survey.

The results show that the Values and Understanding factors attained the highest mean score, whereas the lowest scores were for the Social factor. This result is obtained in both age and sex group. Data show that Career factor was a significantly more important motive for people who want to connect a career in the sports industry. The research did not show any statistically significant relationships between the rank of the event and individual factors.

Keywords: Volunteering, sport, motivations, Volunteer Functions Inventory

Introduction

Advancing commercialization of sport volunteerism acquired increasing attention in the academic literature. The issue of volunteering has become the subject of considerations of many scientists. Initially, volunteering was considered as an altruistic act reflecting a caring approach towards the community. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2011, p. 13) defined volunteering as “unpaid non-compulsory work; that is time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for those outside their own household.” Wilson (2000) emphasized that volunteering requires deeper human involvement than spontaneous help that goes beyond helping family and friends. Volunteering is known as an unselfish act during which an entity or group provides services for no financial gain to benefit another person, group or organization (Wilson, 2000).

In psychological literature (Clary & Snyder, 1999), volunteering is understood primarily as unpaid helping activity. Clary et al. (1998) describe volunteering as an archetype of planned help that requires a deliberate approach to undertaking planned and organized help for others. Activity refers to identifying and organizing one's own priorities, matching personal skills and interests with the chosen activity. Voluntary activity most often takes forms of formal or informal engagement. Harper (2015) referred to the above position by introducing a division into formal and informal volunteering. A formal activity is understood as an activity within a specific

organization, in which the main part, or one of many, is the opportunity to work as a volunteer. This type of volunteering focuses on voluntary participation in activities organized by various institutions, especially those whose area of interest is sport or cultural and educational activities. Informal activity is related to activities outside the organizational forms of work, but it cannot be directed at family members and friends (Plagnol & Huppert, 2010).

In relation to voluntary activities, the definitions of work motivation and the terms describing the motivation to pro-social behaviour seem to be important. Motivation to pro-social behaviour can be defined as a set of variables of a different nature that lead to taking actions for the benefit of another person. Motivation for volunteering refers to the reasons, motives, goals, and mechanisms for undertaking and sustaining activities related to the provision of free aid. Research on the reasons for undertaking voluntary activities relates to finding the answer to the question of what makes people start volunteering and continue it for many years.

The word “motivation” is commonplace in relation to many behaviours. Term comes from Latin words: *movere*, *moveo*, *movi*, *motum*, *se movere*, which mean: to move, readiness to fight, to move, to set in motion, to prepare for something (Gasiul, 2007). “Motivation” defines a set of factors that guide a person’s behaviour and readiness to take a specific action. In this context motivation is the driving force of human behaviour and actions. Most of the definitions describe motivation as the willingness of an individual to complete a task that has an assumed value. Thus, motivation is a mental process that allows us to understand the premises that are followed by people when carrying out tasks in order to achieve a given assumption (Zimbardo, 2012).

Motivation to work is a set of dynamic forces having their source inside and outside the individual, which initiate work-related behaviours as well as determine their form, intensity and duration (Pinder, 1998).

Research into Volunteer Motivation

Over the past few years, various theories about the motives for undertaking voluntary work have emerged. Two factor model by Bierhoff, Klein, and Krampa (1991) argue that there are dynamic links between values, attitudes, and identity. In their model, combination of *egoistic* and *altruistic* motives are the basis for making decisions about volunteering.

In the 1990’s two further models for understanding volunteer motivation emerged – the unidimensional model and the multifactor model. In the Motivation to Volunteer (MTV) unidimensional model developed by Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991), volunteers engage in activities for three main reasons: *altruistic*, *utilitarian* and *social motivations*. *Altruistic motives* are understood by Phelps (1975) as sheer disinterestedness in undertaking actions, the driving force of which is helping others without personal gain. *Utilitarian* motives are related to the desire to gain recognition and prestige from others, develop new skills, expand knowledge, build professional experience and establish future professional contacts. *Social motivation* combines belongingness and relatedness needs. It reflects the desire to be accepted by one’s peers, have friendships and be part of a group. Although MTV was not derived in the context of a theoretical framework, this study generated an alternative motivation perspective and provided a developmental framework for the emergence of further research models.

Clary, Snyder and their colleagues developed another model in understanding volunteer motivation – the *multifactor model*. The Volunteer Functions Inventory model (VFI) was created based on the functional theory of attitudes and motivations. The authors based their research on the theory of attitudes of social researchers Katz (1960) and Smith, Bruner and White (1956). Research on the functional model was initiated by Clary and Snyder (1990, 1991) and Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992). In 1998 its authors published the psychometric data of the inventory specifically to address the motivations of volunteers. In order to investigate the motives for participating in volunteering Clary et al. (1998) decided to use a functional approach to develop the VFI model under six comprehensive functions: *Values*, *Understanding*, *Social*, *Career*, *Protective*, and *Enhancement*. The model is based on a functional approach which assumes that individuals may adopt the same attitudes or be engaged in the same activities, even though these attitudes or actions may have markedly different psychological functions (Clary & Snyder, 1999). “Functions are the motives behind participation. If we know the underlying functions (motives) of volunteers, then we will know the ways of attracting them into volunteering and to sustain their participation” (Law et al., 2011, p. 518). The specific actions of volunteers may be the same for all people the motivations for doing it may be very different (Phillips & Phillips, 2011). On the other hand, a volunteer may be motivated by various factors simultaneously, and these may change over time.

Over the years, Clary and Snyder have presented a series of studies and articles based on VFI and discussed the multifactor model of people’s motivation for volunteering (Clary & Snyder, 2000; Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene &

Haugen, 1994; Clary, Snyder & Stukas, 1996; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Snyder, Clary & Stukas, 2000; Stukas, Clary & Snyder 1999). For many researchers VFI became the standard instrument to assess volunteer motivation.

Further researches revealed another model. McEwin and Jacobsen-D'Arcy (2002) developed Volunteer Motivation Inventory (VMI). VMI contained eight motivational factors, scored with a 5-point Likert scale. The eight motivational factors were identified as: *Values* (part of the individual's value system), *Career* (gain experience and skills may eventually be helpful in assisting to find future employment, build connections in industry), *Personal Growth* (desire for personal growth and increased competence, focus on self-development), *Recognition* (meeting the need for recognition), *Hedonistic* (feeling of being able to be of assistance), *Social* (build social networks and interact with other people), *Reactive* (need to run away from problems) and *Reciprocity* (exchanging things with others for mutual benefit).

Farrell et al. (1998) presented Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS). Authors introduced a smaller division into four categories: extract four volunteer motives: *purposeful* (setting a goal e.g. help in organizing a sports event), *solidarity* (motivational stimuli based on social interactions), *external traditions* (motives connected with family involvement), and *commitments* (include motives related to obligations and expectations). Strigas and Jackson (2003) extending model, added a fifth motivational category – *material rewards*, understood as the rewards and stimulus volunteers received from working the event. MacLean and Hamm (2007), added factor – *love for sport* to five-dimensional model developed by Strigas and Jackson (2003).

Bang and Chlladurai (2003, 2008, 2009), based on previous research, created the Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE). The tool was used for numerous studies on the motivation of volunteers at international sporting events. This concept includes 6 themes: *expression of values*, patriotism, *interpersonal contacts*, *career orientation*, *personal growth*, and *extrinsic rewards* Authors proposed that the scale needs further development with the inclusion of one more factor – *love of sport*.

In order to investigate the motives for volunteering during the Olympic Games, Giannoulakis, Wang and Gray (2007) created Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS). The model included factors Olympic related, Egoistic, and Purposive.

Research context

The tradition of volunteering in post-communist countries is different from that of countries not affected by this ideology. In post-communist countries „community service” was an imposed obligation and treated as an apprenticeship to learn the profession. Society was forced to pursue social work without pay in various areas of social life (Żysko, 2011). This approach changed the perception of volunteering. European commission research has shown that the amount of people engaging in sports volunteering in Poland is one of the lowest in the European Union. Sports volunteering is still associated with short-term social activity aimed at a specific event. In order to create conditions for the development of sports volunteering, the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteering was adopted.

Despite its theoretical advantages and application in many professional fields, the measurement properties of VFI have not been tested in the context of sports volunteers in Poland. Thus, its direct applicability for studying volunteer motivation issues in sport organizations is unknown and uncertain. Due to this fact it is worth exploring the contemporary motives for participating in sports volunteering in Poland.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the individual factors that motivate volunteer participation in Polish sporting events Based on a VFI model the following research questions were set: Which group of factors is the most important motive for participating in sports events volunteering for the studied group? Which group of factors are the least important motive for participating in sports events volunteering for the studied group? Which factors are important in each age group? Which factors are important for each gender?

Moreover the author wanted to find out if sporting event volunteers want to link their career with work in the sports industry? Do *Career* and *Enhancement* factors correlate with the desire to work in the sports industry? Do the motives for participating in sports events volunteering depend on the importance of the event?

Procedure

In order to conduct the research, the author established a cooperation with two leading Academic Sports Federations – AZS Warszawa and AZS Kraków. AZS is one of the oldest sports associations, whose development is based on social activities (Hanusz, 2011). AZS organizes numerous sports events which involve sports volunteers. The questionnaire was distributed amongst sports volunteers by the leaders of sports organizations in April 2021. Data was collected by an online survey during April and May of 2021. The online page was visited by 161 vol-

unteers. 87 of them decided to complete the questionnaire. Respondents for the study consisted of 87 individuals (females = 50; males = 37). The survey completion rate was 54%.

Participants

The target population of this study was comprised of sports volunteers who participated in the AZS Warszawa and AZS Kraków volunteer program.

Table 1. Socio economic profile of participants

Variables		
Sex	Female	50
	Male	37
Age	18 years or less	10
	19–24 years	44
	25–36 years	32
	37–49 years	0
	Over 50 years	1
Education	Primary	5
	Vocational	1
	Secondary	32
	University	49
Professional status	Employed	27
	Student	49
	School pupil	9
	Unemployed	1
	Retired, on sickness pension	1
Place of residence	Rural area	12
	City up to 100 th. inhab.	14
	City 100–500 th. inhab.	12
	City over 500 th. inhab.	49
How many times have you volunteered in sport?	Once	14
	2–3 times	34
	4–6 times	21
	7 times and more	18
		Total N = 87

The data has shown that 50 volunteers were women (57.47%) and 37 were men (42.53%). This trend is characteristic for Polish sport volunteers (Matuła & Nessel, 2014; Bańbuła, 2017). 50.57% participants were between the age of 19 and 24, 36.78% of volunteers were between 25 and 36. 11.49 % were under 18. Data has shown lack of participant over 36 years old. 56.32% of the respondents were classified as holding University degree. 36.78% hold Secondary School degree, 5.75% of the respondents have Primary degree. According to professional status of respondents 56.32% were students and 31.03% were employed. 10.34% were school pupils. Analysing the profile of the respondents in terms of their place of residence 56.32% lives in cities over 500 th. inhab. In cities with less than 500,000 inhabitants, the data is evenly distributed; 16.09% in city up to 100 th. inhab., 13.79% in Cities 100–500 th. inhab. and rural areas.

Conducted researched showed that 83.91% participants volunteered more than once. 39.08% of the respondents volunteered 2–3 times, 24.14% 4–6 times and 20.69% 7 times and more.

Research instrument

Volunteer motivation was examined using a Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) model developed by Clary et al. Researches using the VFI tool have been used in interdisciplinary volunteer environments. In this study VFI model was reused to recognise Polish sports volunteers.

Clary et al. (1998) identified a set of six major volunteer functions.

- (1) **Values**, expressing a system of values considered personally relevant to the entity. It is mainly associated with expressing altruistic values and selfless willingness to help;
- (2) **Understanding**, a theme related to the way to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities. It is a tool for learning about the world and practicing certain skills;
- (3) **Social**, related to the way to develop and strengthen social bonds;
- (4) **Enhancement**, referring to the need for self-development;
- (5) **Career**, gaining related experience and a platform for building a career;
- (6) **Protective**, dealing with personal problems, escaping life's hardships and finding an area that reduces negative feelings.

The 30-point questionnaire was divided into 6 scales, classified as main motives, 5 items each, which are assessed using the 7-point Likert type of the scale ranging from 1 = 'not at all important' to 7 = 'very important'.

The model of the tool and detailed motivations used in the VFI are presented in the Appendix 1.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis of quantitative variables was conducted by calculating the mean, standard deviation, median and quartiles. The analysis of qualitative variables was carried out by calculating the number and percentage of occurrences of each value.

The comparison of the values of quantitative variables in two groups was executed using the Mann-Whitney test while Kruskal-Wallis test (followed by Dunn post-hoc test) was used for more than two groups. After detecting statistically significant differences, post-hoc analysis with Dunn's test was conducted to identify statistically significantly different groups. Significance level for all statistical tests was considered to be $p < 0.05$. Thus, all p values below 0.05 were interpreted as showing significant relationships.

Statistical analysis was performed using R program, version 4.1.0 (R Core Team, 2021).

Results

The VFI questionnaire assesses the six main motives for participating in volunteering (*Values*, *Understanding*, *Social*, *Enhancement*, *Career*, and *Protective*). The analysis of quantitative was conducted by calculating the mean, standard deviation, median and quartiles (Table 2). The result for each area is a number in the range of 5–35. Higher numbers mean that the given motive is more important for the respondents. However, there are no standards that would allow us to say which results are important and which are unimportant. Although, since all the themes are scored on the same scale, their importance can be compared.

Conducted researches have shown that the most important motives for volunteering were *Values* (Median = 30, Mean = 29.03) and *Understanding* (Median = 28, Mean = 27.51). Slightly less important reason were *Enhancement* (Median = 26, Mean = 26.6) and *Career* (Median = 25, Mean = 25.02). The least important were *Protective* (Median = 22, Mean = 22.52) and *Social* (Median = 17, Mean = 16.44).

Table 2. Psychometric data of the VFI

VFI	N	NAs	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	Q1	Q3
Values	87	0	29.03	4.46	30	14	35	27	32
Understanding	87	0	27.51	5.92	28	8	35	24	32.5
Social	87	0	16.44	6.83	17	5	34	11	20.5
Enhancement	87	0	25.6	6.55	26	5	35	22	31
Career	87	0	25.02	7	25	5	35	20	31
Protective	87	0	22.52	7.21	22	5	35	18	28

The study also consider factors important in particular age groups (Tabel 3). *Understanding* (Median *A* = 31, Median *B* = 25, Median *C* = 30) and *Value* (Median *A* = 30, Median *B* = 29, Median *C* = 30) were found to be the most important themes in each age group. *Social* factors (Median *A* = 19,5, Median *B* = 15, Median *C* = 18) were the least important motive.

The research showed that *Understanding* ($p = 0.007$) was significantly less important ($A, C > B$) for age group 19–24 (*B*) than for the respondents 18 years or less (*A*) and 25 years or more (*C*).

Table 3. Psychometric data of the VFI in particular age groups

VFI		Age			p
		18 years or less – A (N = 10)	19–24 years – B (N = 44)	25 years and more – C (N = 33)	
Values	Mean ± SD	30.2 ± 2.9	27.91 ± 5.22	30.18 ± 3.31	p = 0.153
	Median	30	29	30	
	Quartiles	28.25–32.5	25–31	29–33	
Understanding	Mean ± SD	29.9 ± 4.56	25.75 ± 6.07	29.12 ± 5.49	p = 0.007* A,C>B
	Median	31	25	30	
	Quartiles	25.5–33.75	22.75–30.25	27–33	
Social	Mean ± SD	19.8 ± 8.44	15.02 ± 6.07	17.3 ± 6.98	p = 0.144
	Median	19.5	15	18	
	Quartiles	15.75–24	11–20	13–22	
Enhancement	Mean ± SD	28.8 ± 4.34	24.09 ± 6.83	26.64 ± 6.31	p = 0.073
	Median	28.5	24.5	26	
	Quartiles	25.75–31	20–28.25	22–33	
Career	Mean ± SD	25.2 ± 7.38	24.34 ± 6.53	25.88 ± 7.59	p = 0.617
	Median	25	24.5	27	
	Quartiles	19.25–32.75	20.75–28.25	21–33	
Protective	Mean ± SD	24.8 ± 7.36	21.57 ± 7.89	23.09 ± 6.12	p = 0.507
	Median	24.5	21.5	22	
	Quartiles	18.25–29.75	16.75–28.25	21–26	

p – Kruskal-Wallis test + post-hoc analysis (Dunn test); * statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

The study examined which of the factors are important for each sex. In both groups, the most important motives for participating in sports volunteering were those related to *Understanding* (Median *Female* = 30, Median *Male* = 25) and *Values* (Median *Female* = 31, Median *Male* = 29). Research has shown that *Social* factor (Median *Female* = 17.5, Median *Male* = 16) was least important for both sexes.

Research showed that factors such as *Value* ($p = 0.004$), *Understanding* ($p = 0.001$), *Enhancement* ($p = 0.032$), and *Career* ($p = 0.039$) were significantly more important for women.

It was also checked whether the factors related to *Career* and *Enhancement* correlate with the willingness to work in the sports industry. *Career* (Median *A* = 28) was a significantly more important motive for people definitely wanting to work (*A*) in the sports industry than for those who did not (*D*) want it (Median *D* = 19) and did not know (*C*) whether they wanted to (Median *C* = 24.5).

Dunn's test result $p = 0.021$ showed that in the group of people who definitely want to work in the sports industry (*A*), the results were higher ($A > C, D$) than in groups who do not know whether they want to connect their future with a sport industry (*C*) or definitely not willing to do (*D*).

It was also examined whether the motives for participating in sports volunteering change depending on the rank of the sports events. Statistical analysis were conducted via Kruskal-Wallis test ($p < 0.05$). Research has shown that the dependencies are statistically insignificant - all values were above 0.05. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that motives for participating in sports volunteering do not depend on the level of the sports events.

Table 4. Psychometric data of the VFI for female and male

VFI		Sex		p
		Female (N = 50)	Male (N = 37)	
Values	Mean \pm SD	30 \pm 4.54	27.73 \pm 4.05	p = 0.004*
	Median	31	29	
	Quartiles	28.25–33	25–31	
Understanding	Mean \pm SD	29.18 \pm 5.45	25.24 \pm 5.85	p = 0.001*
	Median	30	25	
	Quartiles	26–33.75	23–30	
Social	Mean \pm SD	16.6 \pm 7	16.22 \pm 6.68	p = 0.77
	Median	17.5	16	
	Quartiles	11–20.75	11–20	
Enhancement	Mean \pm SD	26.74 \pm 6.73	24.05 \pm 6.04	p = 0.032*
	Median	27	24	
	Quartiles	23–32	19–28	
Career	Mean \pm SD	26.16 \pm 7.48	23.49 \pm 6.05	p = 0.039*
	Median	26.5	22	
	Quartiles	21.25–33.75	20–28	
Protective	Mean \pm SD	23.34 \pm 7.17	21.41 \pm 7.2	p = 0.178
	Median	23	21	
	Quartiles	19.25–28.75	17–26	

p – Mann-Whitney test; * statistically significant (p < 0.05).

Table 5. Relationship between *Career* and *Enhancement* factor and the willingness to work in the sports industry.

Parametr		Group				p
		Definitely yes – A (N = 43)	Rather yes – B (N = 19)	I don't know – C (N = 14)	Rather/Definitely no – D (N = 11)	
Enhancement	Mean \pm SD	25.95 \pm 7.19	24.16 \pm 5.47	26.07 \pm 6.26	26.09 \pm 6.47	p = 0.633
	Median	26	24	27	25	
	Quartiles	22–32.5	20.5–28.5	24.25–29.5	21.5–32	
Career	Mean \pm SD	27 \pm 7.16	24.16 \pm 5.3	22.29 \pm 6.85	22.27 \pm 7.52	p = 0.021*
	Median	28	23	24.5	19	
	Quartiles	23–33.5	21–26	17.25–27	17.5–27	

p – Kruskal-Wallis test + post-hoc analysis (Dunn test); * statistically significant (p < 0.05).

Table 6. Relationship between sport event rank and VFI factors

VFI		Does the rank of the event matter when deciding whether to participate in sports volunteering?					p
		Definitely yes (N = 24)	Rather yes (N = 30)	I don't know (N = 6)	Rather no (N = 21)	Definitely no (N = 6)	
Values	Mean \pm SD	29.54 \pm 4.5	29 \pm 4.46	29 \pm 4.52	28.38 \pm 4.97	29.5 \pm 3.33	p = 0.914
	Median	30.5	30	29	29	29	
	Quartiles	28.5–32.25	27–31.75	26–32.75	26–32	28.25–30.5	
Understanding	Mean \pm SD	26.67 \pm 7.68	27.27 \pm 5.13	26.5 \pm 6.35	28.48 \pm 4.52	29.67 \pm 6.5	p = 0.783
	Median	27	28	25.5	28	32	
	Quartiles	23.5–32.25	24.25–30	24–31.5	24–33	26.25–34.75	
Social	Mean \pm SD	17.46 \pm 8.43	15.1 \pm 6	15.67 \pm 7.31	16.95 \pm 4.33	18 \pm 10.83	p = 0.782
	Median	17.5	14	15	17	19	
	Quartiles	11–22.5	11–20	10.5–18	15–19	9.75–23	
Enhancement	Mean \pm SD	24.71 \pm 7.02	24.47 \pm 6.39	28.67 \pm 4.13	26.1 \pm 6.49	30 \pm 6.39	p = 0.184
	Median	23	25.5	28.5	25	31.5	
	Quartiles	21.75–30.25	18.75–28	26.5–30.5	24–32	28–35	
Career	Mean \pm SD	26.25 \pm 8.9	24.03 \pm 5.72	26.83 \pm 6.18	24.81 \pm 5.84	24 \pm 9.72	p = 0.645
	Median	27.5	23	26	25	24	
	Quartiles	20–35	21–27.75	23–31.25	20–31	17.25–32.25	
Protective	Mean \pm SD	21.83 \pm 7.29	22.2 \pm 7.33	23.5 \pm 5.75	21.9 \pm 7.43	28 \pm 6.42	p = 0.412
	Median	21	22.5	22	22	28	
	Quartiles	18.5–25.25	18–27.75	18.75–28.25	17–28	24–33.5	

p – Kruskal-Wallis test.

Discussion

The functional model created by Clary et al. is the most widely cited and used in the research literature for assessing volunteer motivations (Agostinho & Paco, 2012; Willems et al., 2012; Wilson, 2012). The VFI model has been adapted to a variety of languages, including Spanish (Chacón & Dávila, 2005), Italian (Marta et al., 2006), Chinese (Wu, Wing Lo & Liu, 2009), German (Oostlander, Guentert, Van Schie, & Wehner, 2014). For the purpose of this research model was translated and adapted into Polish language. In this article, the tool was used to investigate the motives for participating in sports volunteering.

The conducted researches revealed that the mean scores for the *Values* and *Understanding* factors are higher than for all other motivations. This result is obtained in both men and women and in all age groups. *Social* factor turned out to be the least important. Various research based on VFI model indicated *Values* factor obtains the highest mean scores in nearly all studies, regardless of volunteer gender, age or setting. Findings conducted by Bang et al. (2013) and Kim et al. (2010) have shown that the *Values* factor of volunteers' motivation also had a significant direct impact on their affective commitment. Same results was also obtained by McCabe et al. (2007). Where the results indicated that both volunteer and non-volunteer students rated the *Values* and *Understanding* functions as significantly more important than any other function. Chacon et al. (2017) in their work presented systematic review of the research on volunteers using Clary et al.'s VFI (1998). The authors reviewed the research in which they used VFI model to investigate the motives of volunteering. In their work, the authors collected the results from 48

research papers in which the motives of volunteers from organizations related to the areas of health, social, education, sports, environment and civil defence. The results of the research showed that regardless of the profile of the organization's activity the mean score for the *Values* factor is higher than for all other motivations. Research has shown that the *Career* factor was a significantly more important motive for people wanting to work in the sports industry, than for those who did not. The examination did not show any statistically significant relationships between the rank of the event and individual factors. This means that regardless of the rank of the event, the factors determining the motives for participating in voluntary sports activities are the same. The results emphasized the function that volunteering serves for adolescents who choose it as a way to discover and express their self-esteem. Same results was obtained by Crocetti et al, 2012, Grönlund, 2014, Katz & Sasson, 2019. Studies show that *Protective* and *Social* factors usually obtain the lowest scores. Fletcher & Major, 2004, Dávila & Díaz-Morales, 2009, Caldarella et al., 2010, Konrath, Fuhrel-Forbis, Lou, & Brown, 2012 obtained the same result in their research.

Conclusion

Sports volunteering is a perfect combination of voluntary activities for the benefit of others with a passion for sport and physical activity. The combination of sport and volunteering is an interesting offer for organizing free time for communities of all ages, regardless of their origin and social status. Volunteering is an essential element in the development of values. In the era of widespread commercialization of sport, volunteering can be an important instrument of educational influence in shaping altruistic and civic attitudes of the society, regardless of gender and age.

Sports volunteering can increase the competitiveness of young people on the labour market. It is also an excellent platform for acquiring broad skills useful in future work.

Moreover, development of sports volunteering can have a real impact on the way sports are managed. Research findings can provide valuable information to a volunteer coordinator in building volunteers programs. Discovering examples of good volunteering practices and building an offer for volunteers should be based on getting to know the main motives for participating in volunteering. Development and success of voluntary programs is closely related to the social aspects. Following this way we can meet the needs of volunteers and organizers of sports events.

The limitations of this study relate for the most part to the specific sample used. Due to this fact, the findings may not necessarily indicate that certain volunteer functions are the same in other groups. Additionally, despite the good fit of the model the small size of sample may have limited the power of analysis. The area of sports volunteering motives in Poland requires further examination. For this reason, the author intends to conduct further in-depth research.

Ethics approval and informed consent

Ethical approval is not required for this study.

Competing interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding details

The research was financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education within Social and Humanistic Research School of Physical Culture (Research School no. 2) of the Faculty of Physical Education at the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw.

References

- Agostinho, D., & Paco, A. (2012). Analysis of the motivations, generativity, and demographics of the food bank volunteer. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 17, 249-261. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1427>
- Aranda, M., Zappalà, S., & Topa, G. (2019). Motivations for Volunteerism, Satisfaction, and Emotional Exhaustion: The Moderating Effect of Volunteers' Age. *Sustainability*, 11(16), 4477. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11164477>
- Bang, H., & Chelladurai, P. (2003). Motivation and Satisfaction in Volunteering for 2002 World Cup in Korea. Paper presented at the Conference of the North American Society for Sport Management. Ithaca, New York.

- Bang, H. & Ross, S. (2009). Volunteer motivation and satisfaction. *Journal of Venue and Event Management*, 1(1), 61-77.
- Bang, H., & Chelladurai, P. (2009). Development and validation of the volunteer motivations scale for international sporting events (VMS-ISE). *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 6(4), 332. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijsmm.2009.030064>
- Bang, H., Alexandris, K., & Ross, S. D. (2008). Validation of the Revised Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE) at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. *Event Management*, 12(3), 119–131. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599509789659759>
- Bang, H., Alexandris, K., & Ross, S. D. (2009). Validation of the revised Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE) at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. *Event Management*, 12(3–4), 119–131. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599509789659759>
- Bang, H., Won, D., & Kim, Y. (2009). Motivations, commitment, and intentions to continue volunteering for sporting events. *Event Management*, 13(2), 69–81. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599509789686317>
- Bang, H., Ross, S., & Reio, T. G. (2013). From motivation to organizational commitment of volunteers in non-profit sport organizations: The role of job satisfaction. *Journal of Management Development*, 32 (1), pp. 96-112. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621711311287044>
- Bierhoff, H. W., Klein, R., & Kramp, P. (1991). Evidence for the Altruistic Personality from Data on Accident Research. *Journal of Personality*, 59(2), 263–280. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1991.tb00776.x>
- Caldarella, P., Gomm, R. J., Shatzer, R. H., & Wall, D. G. (2010). School- Based Mentoring: A study of volunteer motivations and benefits. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 2(2), 199-216
- Chacón, F., Gutiérrez, G., Sauto, V., Vecina, M. L., & Pérez, A. (2017). Volunteer functions inventory: A systematic review. *Psicothema*, 29(3), 306–316. <https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2016.371>
- Chacón, F., Vecina, M. L., & Davila, M. C. (2007). The Three-Stage Model of volunteers: Duration of service. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 35(5), 627-642. <http://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2007.35.5.627>
- Clary, E. G., & Snyder, M. (1999). The Motivations to Volunteer. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8(5), 156–159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00037>
- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., Ridge, R. D., Copeland, J., Stukas, A. A., Haugen, J., & Mienke, P. (1998). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1516- 56 1630. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1516>
- Clary, E. G., & Snyder, M. (1991). A functional analysis of altruism and prosocial behavior: The case of volunteerism. *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 12, 119-148.
- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., & Ridge, R. (1992). Volunteers' motivations: a functional strategy for the recruitment, placement, and retention of volunteers. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 2, 333-350
- Cnaan, R. A., & Goldberg-Glen, R. S. (1991). Measuring Motivation to Volunteer in Human Services. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 27(3), 269–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886391273003>
- Crocetti, E., Jahromi, P., & Meeus, W. (2012). Identity and civic engagement in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(3), 521–532. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2011.08.003>
- Dávila, M. C., & Díaz-Morales, J. F. (2009). Age and motives for volunteering: Further evidence. *European Journal of Psychology*, 5(2), 82-95. <http://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v5i2.268>
- Dickson, T. J., Benson, A. M., Blackman, D. A., & Terwiel, F. A. (2013). It's all about the Games! 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games volunteers. *Event Management*, 17(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599513x13623342048220>
- Dickson, T. J., Darcy, S., Edwards, D., & Terwiel, F. A. (2015). Sport Mega-Event Volunteers' Motivations and Postevent Intention to Volunteer: The Sydney World Masters Games, 2009. *Event Management*, 19(2), 227–245. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599515x14297053839692>
- Farrell, J. M., Johnston, M. E., & Twynam, G. D. (1998). Volunteer Motivation, Satisfaction, and Management at an Elite Sporting Competition. *Journal of Sport Management*, 12(4), 288–300. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.12.4.288>
- Gasiul, H. (2007). Personalistyczna koncepcja rozwoju osobowości [Personalistic concept of personality development]. *Personalizm*, 13, 71-102.
- Gasiul, H. (2007). *Teorie emocji i motywacji [Theories of emotions and motivation]*. Wyd. UKSW. Warszawa.
- Giannoulakis, C., Wang, C.-H., & Gray, D. (2007). Measuring Volunteer Motivation in Mega-Sporting Events. *Event Management*, 11(4), 191–200. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599508785899884>
- Hanusz, H. (2011) Wolontariat w działalności i rozwoju Akademickiego Związku Sportowego [Volunteering in the activities and development of the Academic Sports Association]. In J. Nowocien & K. Zuchora (Ed.), *Wolontariat*

- w edukacji, sporcie, w ruchu olimpijskim i paraolimpijskim [Volunteering in education, sports, in the Olympic and Paralympic movements]. Warszawa: Estrella Sp. z o. o.
- International Labour Organisation (2011). Manual on the measurement of volunteer work. Retrieved 05.09.2021 from http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_167639.pdf.
- Katz, H., & Sasson, U. (2019). Beyond universalistic motivations: towards an adolescent volunteer functions inventory. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 10(2), 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1332/204080519x15629379320509>
- Kim, M., Zhang, J. J., & Connaughton, D. (2010). Modification of the Volunteer Functions Inventory for application in youth sports. *Sport Management Review*, 13(1), 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2009.04.005>
- Law, B. M., Shek, D. T., & Ma, C. M. (2011). Exploration of the factorial structure of the revised personal functions of the volunteer scale for Chinese adolescents. *Social Indicators Research*, 100(3), 517–537. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-010-9627-2>
- Lim, J. P. S. & Mohamad Ibrahim, H. (2020). An exploratory study into the motivations of green volunteers at the 29th Southeast Asian Games. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism*, 9(1), 73–101.
- MacLean, J., & Hamm, S. (2007). Motivation, commitment, and intentions of volunteers at a large Canadian sporting event. *Leisure/Loisir*, 31(2), 523–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14927713.2007.9651394>
- Marta, E., Guglielmetti, C., & Pozzi, M. (2006). Volunteerism during young adulthood: An Italian investigation into motivational patterns. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 17(3), 221–232. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-006-9015-3>
- McCabe, T., White, K., & Obst, P. (2007). The Importance of Volunteering Functions to University Students. *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, 12(2), pp. 50–58.
- Nichols, G. (2017). Volunteering in Community Sports Associations: A Literature Review. *Voluntaristics Review*, 2(1), 1–75. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24054933-12340015>
- Nowocień, J., & Zuchora, K. (2011) (ed.) *Wolontariat w edukacji, sporcie, w ruchu olimpijskim i paraolimpijskim [Volunteering in education, sports, in the Olympic and Paralympic movements]*. Warszawa: Estrella Sp. z o. o.
- Oostlander, J., Guentert, S. T., Van Schie, S., & Wehner, T. (2014). Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI): Psychometric properties of the German adaptation and construct validation. *Diagnostica*, 60(2), 73–85. <https://doi.org/10.1026/0012-1924/a000098>
- Phillips, L., & Phillips, M. (2011). Altruism, egoism, or something else: Rewarding volunteers effectively and affordably. *Southern Business Review*, 36(1), 23–35.
- Pinder, C. C. (1998). *Work Motivation in Organizational behavior*. Upper Saddle River, New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Plagnol, A. C., Huppert, F. A. (2010). Happy to help? Exploring the factors associated with variations in rates of volunteering across Europe. *Social Indicators Research*, 97(2), 157–176. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-009-9494-x>
- R Core Team (2021). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL <https://www.R-project.org/>.
- Rozmiarek, M., Poczta, J., & Malchrowicz-Moško, E. (2021). Motivations of Sports Volunteers at the 2023 European Games in Poland. *Sustainability*, 13(11), 6406. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116406>
- Strigas, A. D., & Jackson, E. N. (2003). Motivating volunteers to serve and succeed: design and results of a pilot study that explores demographics and motivational factors in sport volunteerism. *International Sports Journal*, 7 (1), 111–123.
- Twynam, G. D., Farrell, J. M., & Johnston, M. E. (2002). Leisure and Volunteer Motivation at a Special Sporting Event. *Leisure/Loisir*, 27(3–4), 363–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14927713.2002.9651310>
- Ustawa z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003 r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie [The Act of April 24, 2003 on Public Benefit Activity and about volunteering] [doc. electr.] Retrieved 09.9.2021 from <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20030960873>.
- Wallrodt, S., & Thieme, L. (2019). The role of sports volunteering as a signal in the job application process. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2019.1598457>
- Willems, J., Huybrechts, G., Jergers, M., Vantilborgh, T., Bidee, J., & Pepermans, R. (2012). Volunteer decisions (not) to leave: Reasons to quit versus functional motives to stay. *Human Relations*, 65(7), 883–900. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726712442554>
- Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 215–240. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.215>
- Wilson, J. (2012). Volunteerism research: A review essay. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41(2), 176–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764011434558>

- Wu, J., Wing Lo, T., & Liu, E. S. (2009). Psychometric properties of the volunteer functions inventory with Chinese students. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 37(6), 769-780. <http://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20330>
- Zimbardo, P. G.(2012). *Psychologia i życie [Psychology and life]*. Warszawa: Wyd. PWN.
- Żyśko, J. (2011). Wolontariat Polaków w sporcie na tle aktywności wolontarystycznej mieszkańców Europy [Volunteering of Poles in sport against the background of the voluntary activity of European citizens]. In J. Nowocień, and K. Zuchora, K., (Ed.), *Wolontariat w edukacji, sporcie, w ruchu olimpijskim i paraolimpijskim [Volunteering in education, sports, in the Olympic and Paralympic movements]*. Warszawa: Estrella Sp. z o. o.

This is Open Access article distributed under the terms of CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License.