





Examination of relationships between communication satisfaction and organizational identification of sport 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

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the predictor relationships between the satisfaction sport science students obtain from communication with lecturers and their organizational identification. Moreover, the study aims to determine whether there is a difference in both dependent variables in terms of gender, grade, whether they like their educational department, desire to change their department, establishment of out-of-class communication with lecturers, and being in active communication with lecturers in class. In this study, quantitative correlational techniques are used. Our sample comprised 252 (\bar{x} age = 21.39 ± 2.16) sport science students (127 female; 125 male). The “Student Communication Satisfaction Scale” developed by Goodboy, Martin, and Bolkan (2009) and adapted to Turkish by Akin, Yalniz, and Kazaz (2015) was used as a data collection tool, as was the “Organizational Identification Scale” developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) and adapted to Turkish by Tak and Aydemir (2004). Parametric data was analyzed using Pearson correlation analysis, simple linear regression analysis, 2 × 2 MANOVA, and two-way ANOVA. Nonparametric data was analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis H statistical test technique. The results indicate a strong and positively oriented relationship between the communication satisfaction and organizational identification of sport science students. Moreover, it is seen that communication satisfaction is a crucial predictor of organizational identification. According to our data, females' communication satisfaction and identification levels are much higher than those of males. Students' like or dislike of the department where they receive an education and the quality and form of communication they have established with lecturers result in significant differences in both dependent variables.

Key words: Organizational communication, interpersonal communication, communication satisfaction, identification, undergraduate student

Introduction

Today, the human factor in each stage of the organizational structure exists as an element affecting and also affected by the organizational processes through psychology and social relations. Unlike classical and neo-classical theories in management, in organizations which modern approaches handle as an open system, different elements of the organization are assessed concerning their interaction with each other and the environment. With this

perspective, the human subsystem cannot be handled independently from the other factors of the organization. Therefore, individuals in organizations are accepted not only as a cost element but also as an element that must be improved just like other sources whose efficiency should be enhanced and whose success deeply influences the success of the organization (Yüksel, 2000). It can be said that unlike other structures within the organization, the achievement of the human factor as a cultural, social, and psychological being may be possible with the development and maintenance of certain positive feelings and thoughts towards the institution. Identification can also be regarded as one of these positive feelings. It is seen that different definitions have been made in the literature when the identification concept (TLA, 2019), which is described as an object's or individual's adoption of all features of a cluster or integration with it, is assessed organizationally. While Patchen (1970) generalizes it as a depiction including achievement, participation, and work cohesion (cited in Yıldız, 2013), Mael and Ashforth (1992) summarize it as an individual perceiving his institution's achievements and failures as if they were his own and perceiving himself as one with his institution. On the other hand, Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) summarize it as a cognitive bond involving the characteristics of perceived organizational identity being the same as ego. According to Riketta (2005), though there are different definitions regarding organizational identification, all definitions emphasize the members interiorizing the values of the organization cognitively, emotionally, or both, and feeling themselves to be part of the organization. In this sense, identification ensures an individual's participation in identification-oriented activities, as well as his satisfaction with these activities. This allows him to regard himself as a part of the organization, representing the group and getting into the act of consolidating the elements related to group formation such as integrity and interaction. It provides an opportunity for new organization members to fit into the organization, show their commitment, and internalize organizational values and beliefs (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For individuals who identify their personal identity with their organization, actions they have performed are perceived to be more significant (Özdemir, 2013). Studies suggest that individuals who identify themselves with their institutions are more eager to move in the direction of organizational interests (Rousseau, 1998), and that their performance enhances these interests (Şantaş, Uğurluoğlu, Kandemir, & Çelik, 2016).

Individuals' organizational emotion, sense, and actions in each unit of universities, which are organizational structures, can be assessed as a crucial subject area for the realization of corporate objectives. When the processes of the universities focusing on the learner (Ortaş, 2005) are taken into account, the significance of the student-university relationship becomes non-negligible, particularly as the primary goal of these organizations is to ensure the qualified labor force of a country. In this sense, as the identification of students themselves with their universities enhances their academic achievement and their organizational commitment (Wilkins, Butt, Kratochvil, & Balakrishnan, 2016), it may be suggested that they will act willingly to attain organizational objectives because the students who identify with the school have an internalized sense of belonging. It is indicated that they feel they are an important part of the school environment and school comprises an important part of their own experiences (Finn, 1989). Finn developed a model related to this situation and sequenced into four groups how students act as their identification with the school grows. Students at the first level acknowledge the need to go to school. They are ready for the tasks being a student brings, and they respond to teacher instructions. Second level students open a dialog with the teacher in the class. They are enthusiastic about staying at school after class, doing far more class work and homework than necessary. They join social activities with a scientific background. Students at the third level participate in intense academic studies besides extracurricular social and sportive activities. The fourth level implies the participation of students in the school administration. However, it is not an easy process for these aforementioned acts to strengthen the student-university relationship (Özdemir, 2013) and thus ensure identification with the school. This is because many factors exist within organizations that affect identification, such as meeting the needs of individuals (Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970), perceived organizational support, job satisfaction (Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006), and communication processes (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2017). When approached from the standpoint of undergraduate students, communication processes enabling lecturer-student relationships can be assessed as one of them. This is because communication, which is shortly defined as "the process of knowledge, production, transferring and interpretation" (Dökmen, 2004), has significant functions such as realizing organizational objectives in organizations, managing formal and informal relationships, sharing social emotions and thoughts, and relaying information in education. It does not seem possible to realize organizational and educational objectives in educational institutions without communication. Research conducted on different groups also reveals that there are relationships between organizational identification and organizational communication (Yıldız, 2013; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2017). However, within this period, communication between individuals is not sufficient alone. What is also important is how this process is managed and how the people involved feel about it. For this reason, understanding the outcomes of communication, such as "satisfaction," is suggested as a precondition for forming a holistic explanation (Hecht, 1978b). Communication satisfaction is an emotional

response showing that communication objectives and expectations are realized successfully (Hecht, 1978a). While the individuals who are satisfied with their communication show healthier parameters psychologically, communication dissatisfaction may cause pathological results to arise (Gülner, 2007) and individuals to have difficulty in their life experience (Hecht, 1978b). Accordingly, communication satisfaction is a socio-emotional outcome taking place as a result of interactions in the communication process (Tsai, Chuang, & Hsieh, 2009). Ensuring a sense of satisfaction in the communication between the lecturer and student in the educational environment is interpreted as an emotional state that teachers must deal with (Goodboy et al., 2009). It is argued that in educational literature, studies related to the teacher-student relationship give more emphasis to attitudes and affective learning and suggest that communication satisfaction in the teacher-student relationship is not necessarily part of the job (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011), but is rather a secondary result of these studies (Goodboy et al., 2009). It is seen that studies examining both communication satisfaction and identification as well as two variables attitudinally have been conducted mostly on employees (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Varona, 1996; Nakra, 2006; Çakınberk, Derin, & Demirel, 2011; Henderson, 2013; Derin & Tuna, 2017; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). For this reason, the current study aims to identify whether there is a relationship between organizational identification and satisfaction that students studying in the field of sport science have obtained from communication with lecturers, as well as whether or not communication satisfaction is a significant predictor of organizational identification. Moreover, the study aims to determine whether there is a difference in both dependent variables in terms of gender, grade, like or dislike of educational department, desire to change department, establishment of out-of-class communication with lecturers, and being in active communication with lecturers in class.

Hypotheses

H¹: Communication satisfaction is the significant predictor of organizational identification.

H²: There is a significant difference in communication satisfaction and organizational identification according to gender and class.

H³: There is a significant difference in communication satisfaction according to the factors of liking the department, desire to change department, and out-of-class communication with lecturers.

H⁴: There is a significant difference in organizational identification according to the factors of liking the department, desire to change department, and out-of-class communication with lecturers.

H⁵: There is a significant difference in communication satisfaction according to in-class communication.

H⁶: There is a significant difference in organizational identification according to in-class communication.

Methods

Research design and sample

This study is a predictive-relational study. The sample of the study is composed of a total of 252 (\bar{x} age = 21.39 ± 2.16) sport science students, 127 female and 125 male. They were chosen using the convenient sampling method and were all willing to participate in the study.

Data collection tools

The data collection tools used in the study were the “Shortened Student Communication Satisfaction Scale” (SSCSS) developed by Goodboy, Martin, and Bolkan (2009) and adapted to Turkish by Akın, Yalnız, and Kazaz (2015); the “Organizational Identification Scale” (OIS) developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) and adapted to Turkish by Tak and Aydemir (2004); and the “Personal Information Form” (PIF) developed by the researchers.

Shortened Student Communication Satisfaction Scale (SSCSS): The Communication Satisfaction Scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale composed of 8 items. There is no sub-dimension in the scale where there are also reverse items. High scores obtained from the scale suggest that communication satisfaction is high. When the validity and reliability of the scales are analyzed, one-dimensional modal in confirmatory factor analysis which is applied for construct validity is conferred as consistent ($\chi^2 = 51.11$, $df = 16$, $RMSEA = .084$, $IFI = .95$, $CFI = .95$, $NFI = .93$, $NNFI = .92$, $GFI = .96$, $SRMR = .056$). The scale’s total item correlation co-efficient is ranked between .26 and .63. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability co-efficient is calculated as .75 (Akın, Yalnız, & Kazaz, 2015). Cronbach’s alpha calculated as internal consistency co-efficient in this scope of research is designated as .72.

Organizational Identification Scale (OIS): The Organizational Identification Scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale that does not include reverse items. It is composed of 6 items and has no sub-dimension. A high score obtained from the scale indicates that the organizational identification is high.

It is suggested that the results ($\chi^2(9) = 25^{**}$, $\chi^2/df = 2.77$, GFI = 0.97, AGFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.96, RMSR = 0.037, RMSEA = 0.077) in confirmatory factor analysis applied to test construct validity also show that the competency of the scale for measuring the organizational identification variable is high. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability co-efficient is calculated as .88 (Tak & Aydemir, 2004). In the reliability study applied in this scope of the research, Cronbach's alpha as internal consistency co-efficient is calculated as .90.

Personal Information Form (PIF): Data concerning the demographic information and independent variables of the participants of the study were collected through the "Personal Information Form" designed by the researchers.

Data collection

Data was gathered from students studying in the department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching, Coaching Teaching, Sports Management, and Recreation in the Faculty of Sport Sciences. To apply assessment tools, classes were visited, necessary explanations were made, and volunteer students were supported with filling in the forms.

Statistical analysis of data

The gathered data was evaluated through statistical test techniques such as frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, Kruskal-Wallis H, Pearson, simple linear regression analysis, two-way ANOVA, and 2×2 MANOVA. Whether the data fulfill the prerequisites of parametric tests has been concluded by analyzing the skewness and kurtosis values (normal distribution of data) and Levene (the equality of variances) test results. After calculating the Mahalanobis distance of the data, multivariate normal distributions were interpreted. It is suggested that for SSCSS, the kurtosis value is $.240 \pm .15$ and the skewness value is $.050 \pm .3$, while for OIS the kurtosis value is $.205 \pm .15$ and the skewness value is $-.847 \pm .30$. By examining the scatter diagram, it can be concluded whether the correlation shows a linear relationship for correlation and regression analysis. In MANOVA analysis, Box's test was used to test the hypothesis that the covariance matrixes of the independent variables are equal within the groups. In the same analysis, Wilks' lambda test was used to test the difference in the means of dependent variables in accordance with the groups in independent variables. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency co-efficient was calculated to designate the scope of research reliability of the scales used in the study. Type 1 error is suggested as 5%.

Findings

As can be seen from Table 1, the point average of communication satisfaction (CS) of students participating in the study is $\bar{x} = 3.29 \pm .65$ and the point average of their organizational identification (OI) is $\bar{x} = 3.31 \pm .96$. Accordingly, it can be said that the communication satisfaction and organizational identification of sport science students are at the intermediate level.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics related to communication satisfaction and organizational identification of sport science students

Scale factor	n	\bar{x}	sd
Communication satisfaction	252	3.29	.65
Organizational identification	252	3.31	.96

When Table 2 is analyzed, it can be seen that there is a positively strong relationship between CS and OI. Accordingly, as the satisfaction the student gains from the lecturer-student communication increases, the student identifies himself more with the institution where he is studying.

Table 2. Pearson correlation analysis towards determining the relationship between the communication satisfaction and organizational identification

n = 252	Communication satisfaction
Organizational identification	.750**

** – $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

Table 3. Basic linear regression analysis results concerning the prediction of communication satisfaction with organizational identification

Variable	B	Standard error B	β	t	p
Fixed	-.322	.207		-1.558	.121
Communication satisfaction	1.103	.061	.750	17.936	.000

$R = .750$; $R^2 = .563$; Adjusted $R^2 = .561$
 $F(1, 251) = 321.688$; $p = .000$

When Table 3 is analyzed, according to the results of regression analysis, communication satisfaction is a significant predictor of organizational identification ($R = .750$; $R^2 = .563$; $F(1, 251) = 321.688$; $p = .000$). Communication satisfaction explains 56% total variance in organizational identification.

Table 4. 2×2 MANOVA test ANOVA results towards analyzing differences in Communication Satisfaction (CS) and Organizational Identification (OI) scores in terms of gender and class

Source of variance	Dependent variable	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Gender	CS	3.015	1	3.015	7.641	.006	.030
	OI	14.490	1	14.490	17.253	.000	.066
Class	CS	2.274	3	.758	1.921	.127	.023
	OI	5.029	3	1.676	1.996	.115	.024
Gender \times class	CS	6.821	3	2.274	5.762	.001	.066
	OI	9.034	3	3.011	3.585	.014	.042
Error	CS	96.282	244	.395			
	OI	204.932	244	.840			
Total	CS	2848.016	251				
	OI	3001.222	251				

When the analysis results (2×2 MANOVA) are assessed, the primary effects of gender \times class interaction ($\lambda = .916$; $F = 3.621$; $p = .002$) and gender ($\lambda = .933$; $F = 8.671$; $p = .000$) are found to be significant in communication satisfaction and organizational identification, while the primary effect of the class variable is not found to be significant ($\lambda = .964$; $F = 1.488$; $p = .180$). The ANOVA test is applied to determine which independent variable in which dependent variable contributes to multivariate relevance.

Accordingly, meaningful differences are specified in CS and OI in terms of gender \times class interaction. When confidence intervals are analyzed, it is seen that the communication satisfaction of 4th grade male students is lower than in the 2nd and 3rd grades. Moreover, it is suggested that the identification of 3rd and 4th grade female students is much higher than those in the 1st grade or males in the 3rd and 4th grades. When the primary effects of the gender variable on dependent variables are analyzed, it is found that both the communication satisfaction and organizational identification of female students are higher than the males'.

Table 5. Communication satisfaction two-way ANOVA results in terms of the factors of liking the department, desire to change department, and out-of-class communication with lecturers

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Liking the department	2.842	2	1.421	4.517	.012	.038
Desire to change department	.401	2	.201	.638	.529	.005
Out-of-class communication with lecturers	2.206	2	1.103	3.506	.032	.029
Error	72.675	231	.315			
Total	2848.016	252				

When Table 5 is analyzed, statistically significant differences are specified in students' communication satisfaction in terms of liking their department and out-of-class communication with lecturers, while a non-significant difference is found in terms of desire to change department. According to the results of follow-up tests, the CS of those who like their department and are indecisive is higher than those who do not like their department. In addition, the CS of those who like their department is higher than for those who do not like their department and are indecisive (\bar{x} yes = 3.45; \bar{x} indecisive = 3.11; \bar{x} no = 2.72). Similarly, the CS of those who always or sometimes engage in out-of-class communication with lecturers is higher than for those who never do. Moreover, the CS of those who always engage in out-of-class communication is higher than for those who sometimes or never do (\bar{x} always = 3.38; \bar{x} sometimes = 3.11; \bar{x} never = 2.99).

Table 6. Organizational identification two-way ANOVA results in terms of the factors of liking the department, desire to change department, and out-of-class communication with lecturers

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F	p	ηp^2
Liking the department	13.182	2	6.591	12.276	.000	.096
Desire to change department	1.177	2	.588	1.096	.336	.009
Out-of-class communication with lecturers	9.367	2	4.684	8.723	.000	.028
Error	124.027	231	.537			
Total	3001.222	252				

When Table 6 is analyzed, statistically significant differences are specified in students' organizational identification in terms of liking their department and out-of-class communication with lecturers, while no significant difference is found in terms of desire to change their department. According to the results of follow-up tests, the communication satisfaction of those who like their department and are indecisive is higher than for those who do not like their department. The OI of those who like their department is higher than for those who do not and are indecisive (\bar{x} yes = 3.75; \bar{x} indecisive = 2.91; \bar{x} no = 2.33). Similarly, the OI of those who always or sometimes engage in out-of-class communication with lecturers is higher than for those who never do. Moreover, the OIS of those who always communicate with lecturers outside of class is higher than for those who sometimes or never do (\bar{x} always = 3.54; \bar{x} sometimes = 2.98; \bar{x} never = 2.80).

Table 7 shows that there are significant differences in students' communication satisfaction in terms of active in-class communication with lecturers (χ^2 ($df=2, n=252$) = 41.354, $p=.000$). According to t test results with Bonferroni correction, those who argue that lecturers always engage in active communication have much higher communication satisfaction than those who say sometimes ($t_{226} = 4.317, p=.000$) and never ($t_{97} = 6.105, p=.000$), while those who argue that lecturers sometimes engage in active communication have much higher communication satisfaction than those who say never ($t_{175} = 3.636, p=.000$).

Table 7. Communication satisfaction Kruskal–Wallis H Test results in terms of in-class communication

Factor	Active communication	n	Mean rank	df	χ^2	p
Communication satisfaction	Always	75	163.08	2	41.354	.000
	Sometimes	153	119.19			
	Never	24	58.77			

Table 8. Organizational identification Kruskal–Wallis H Test results in terms of in-class communication

Factor	Active communication	n	Mean rank	df	χ^2	p
Organizational identification	Always	75	164.70	2	51.956	.000
	Sometimes	153	120.59			
	Never	24	44.79			

Table 8 illustrates that significant differences are found in students' organizational identification in terms of active in-class communication with lecturers ($\chi^2 (df = 2, n = 252) = 51.956, p = .000$). According to t test results with Bonferroni correction, those who argue that lecturers always engage in active communication have much higher communication satisfaction than those who say sometimes ($t_{226} = 4.446, p = .000$) and never ($t_{97} = 8.443, p = .000$), while those who say sometimes have much higher communication satisfaction than those who say never ($t_{175} = 5.762, p = .000$).

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the students of sport science have an intermediate perception of the satisfaction they have obtained from communication with lecturers and their identification with their faculties. Moreover, while specifying that there is a positively oriented strong relationship between CS and OI, it is determined that CS is a significant predictor of OI and explains 56% total variance in organizational identification. When the literature is reviewed, it is shown that few studies examining the relationship between these two variables are on the basis of employees in an organization, and no study analyzing organizational identification and satisfaction obtained from the lecturer-student communication process can be found. Studies analyzing the relationship between organizational behavior and communication constituted the theoretical framework of this study. However, the research results were discussed through studies conducted on different groups and/or through studies approaching other variables directly related to the variables in the scope of the research. In this context, in studies conducted on academicians (Derin & Tuna, 2017), teachers (Yıldız, 2013), and executives (Nakra, 2006), a relationship between communication satisfaction and organizational identification is indicated. Nakra (2006) suggests in his study that effective communication has a critical importance to identification. Moreover, it is seen that communication satisfaction is correlated with organizational commitment (Henderson, 2013; Varona, 1996) and belonging (Carriere & Bourque, 2009), besides organizational citizenship behavior (Kandlousi, Ali, & Abdollahi, 2010) expressing personal voluntary actions to attain organizational objectives (Lievens & Anseel, 2004, cited: Sezgin, 2005). If it is taken into account that individuals identify with organizations to satisfy their need to belong and to minimize uncertainty (Derin & Tuna, 2017), and that organizational commitment is a significant determinant of identification (Çakınberk, Derin, & Demirel, 2011), it can be suggested that the aforementioned research results show consistency with this current study. Smidts, Pruyn, and Van Riel (2017) also note that the communication climate in organizations affects identification. In the research conducted on academicians by Derin and Tuna (2017), communication satisfaction was proven to be a significant determinant of organizational identification.

When the genders and grades of our participants are analyzed interactively, it can be concluded that in male students the communication satisfaction of 4th graders is lower than that of lower divisions and generally lower than that of girls. Studies in the literature suggest that, in general, women's communication skills are at a better level than those of men, as they can more clearly express their thoughts, experiences, and anxieties and can build warmer relations (McDowell, 1993; Korkut, 1997; Görür, 2001; Tepeköylü, Soytürk, & Çamlıyer, 2009). For this reason, female students may have obtained more satisfaction than males in their communication process with lecturers. However, a new study to be conducted on the genders of lecturers may strengthen these gender-based explanations further. When findings concerning identification are analyzed, female students in the upper divisions are seen to identify more with their institutions than both female students in lower divisions and male students at the same class level. In the studies conducted on this subject, it is seen that organizational identification increases with duration of stay or length of service at an institution (Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Pepermans, Vloeberghs, & Perkisas, 2003). However, unlike this study, in the studies conducted with undergraduates, it is suggested that the upper divisions identify less with their institutions (Meydan & Polat, 2013). Intersexual differences can be connected with the expectations that the social and familial structure of Turkish society place on men and women. In Turkish society, a post-graduate male individual is expected to start working as soon as possible and to sustain his life; female individuals are treated with more tolerance and are not expected to start a new life unless they get married. Consequently, while this case leads male post-graduates to search for work, it may detract from their identification with the organization.

The study investigates whether undergraduates desire to change their department, if they like their department, if they have had out-of-class communication with lecturers, and whether there is active communication in the class. Accordingly, the presence or lack of desire to change departments did not make a difference in communication satisfaction and identification.

However, it is stated that the students who most identify with their institution and are most satisfied with lecturers' communication are those who like their department and can sufficiently communicate with lecturers outside of class.

No study has been found to analyze and discuss these findings in the literature. However, these findings can be assessed as an unexpected result. It is guessed that lecturers' communication with students in out-of-class contacts individually or in small groups may meet individual needs and expectations and may enable students to feel more secure. Individuals who are emotionally secure also succeed in communication (Cüceloğlu, 2006). Moreover, such contacts may provide an opportunity for private situations to be shared that could not otherwise be shared in class. In this case, it is more probable for students to feel more satisfied. While similar situations concerning identification come into question, on the basis of the findings of this research, when it is taken into consideration that communication satisfaction explains the change in identification at the rate of 56%, similar outcomes concerning both variables can be suggested as unexpected. According to another finding, the students of lecturers who communicate actively with their students in class have a better identification and communication satisfaction level. Communication is a dynamic process that takes place dually between the communication message sender and receiver (Cüceloğlu, 2006). A communication process that loses its dynamism and duality turns into informatics (one-way flow of information; Dökmen, 2004). Gaining satisfaction from such a process does not seem probable.

Conclusion and recommendations

In the communication process between the lecturer and the student, satisfaction obtained by the students significantly affects their identification with the institution where they receive their education. As their satisfaction increases, so does their identification with the institution. However, whether they like the department where they study and the quality of communication they have with lecturers are also significant factors. Therefore, lecturers need to help increase student motivations through positive communication processes both in and outside of the class.

According to the European Statistical Office (Eurostat) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 International Reports, Turkey has the highest school dropout rates in Europe among National Education level students (primary, secondary, and high school). While reviewing the literature concerning the subject, studies suggesting the relationship between the variables in the scope of this research (organizational identification and communication satisfaction) and commitment to school or decision to drop out of school were encountered. In this respect, this study may be replicated at National Education level schools and be efficient in revealing the reasons students drop out of school and provide information on taking the necessary measures to prevent this from occurring.

Authors' note:

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Comparison of the influence of participation in screen golf on self-esteem, loneliness, depression, social isolation, and life satisfaction between people with and without disabilities in Republic of Korea

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

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Abstract

Screen golf is a product of the combination of modern technology and leisure. This new form of sport can provide people with disabilities opportunities for positive life experiences through sport participation. This study aimed to investigate differences in the effect of screen golf participation on psychosocial factors (self-esteem, isolation, depression, loneliness, and life satisfaction) in people with and without disabilities. With 293 survey respondents in this study, the Multivariate Analysis of Variances (MANOVA) was performed twice to measure differences between groups after ensuring the validity and reliability of the instrument. Participation in screen golf demonstrated a positive effect for all factors for people with disabilities. Results also showed a more positive effect on self-esteem and life satisfaction for people without disabilities with screen golf experience than for those without any screen golf experience. This study demonstrated that screen golf, as a physical leisure activity, was helpful to all study participants, with greater positive effects observed for participants with disabilities. This finding suggests that ubiquitous leisure activities such as screen golf made possible by advancements in modern technologies offer desirable benefits to many. This study is highly meaningful since it demonstrated how technologies could be helpful to people with disabilities who historically have less access to leisure activities than able-bodied people.

Key words: Physical disability, depression, life satisfaction, loneliness, self-esteem, social isolation

Introduction

The development of information technology (IT) in the fourth industrial revolution has an impact on sports leisure activities. In this environment, screen golf recently attracts people's attention. 'Screen golf' is a popular technology-based sport and uses a computer-based golf simulator (Kim, Seo, Kim, & Chang, 2014). A computer, a simulator, and multiple digital cameras display images that look similar to real golf environments and situations on a high-definition (HD) screen. These technologies allow users to enjoy golf in a virtual environment (Lee, Chung, & Lee, 2013) in lieu of playing golf outdoors in the traditional sense.

Playing a typical round of golf outdoors at a course (actual golf) can be expensive, requires travel time, and expends energy. Since screen golf is relatively less costly and burdensome than actual golf, this virtual participation setting was met with enthusiasm from people who had experienced difficulties playing actual golf due to

environmental and circumstantial restrictions (Lyu, 2015). This likely includes people with disabilities. It appears that ubiquitous leisure activities can offer potential benefits to people with disabilities as well as to able-bodied people who are too busy to dedicate time or lack the financial resources to visit traditional golf courses.

The estimated number of people with disabilities in the Republic of Korea is approximately 2.67 million, or 5.39% of the total Korean population (Park, 2018). Similar to the able-bodied population, people with disabilities benefit both physically and psychologically from participation in leisure activities (Park, 1999; Park & Yu, 1997). In response to this, researchers continue to make efforts to identify variables that have positive psychological effects for people with disabilities. Existing studies reported that psychosocial factors such as self-esteem, depression, loneliness, and social isolation can be improved through participation in leisure activities (Janisse, Nedd, Escamilla, & Nies, 2004; Melin, Fugl-Meyer, & Fugl-Meyer, 2003). Achieving psychological well-being through leisure activities can have a significant positive effect on the quality of life for people with disabilities (Richardson, Smith, & Papathomas, 2017).

This study aimed to investigate the effect of participation in screen golf – a ‘ubiquitous’ technology – on the psychological health of people with and without disabilities. The findings of this study will offer valuable information on the potential benefits of leisure activities which integrate highly advanced IT technologies and sports.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is perceived as an important personal psychological component (Bano, Anjum, & Pasha, 2015; Wagnsson, Lindwall, & Gustafsson, 2014) because it is defined as an essential evaluation of oneself (Rosenberg, 1990). Self-esteem is also an important factor for understanding the value of oneself (Fox & Corbin, 1989), and an effective index indicating a healthy life (Shek & McEwen, 2012). Factors such as education, financial status, social reputation, and social support are considered important variables for developing, expanding, and improving self-esteem (Logel, Holmes, Anthony, Wood, & Cameron, 2006).

Researchers found that while people with positive self-esteem generally perceived themselves as valuable individuals (Sonstroem, 1997), those with low self-esteem experience negative circumstances, such as weak physical status, aggressive behavior, and limited economic activity (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). People with disabilities often experience low self-esteem due to the constraints of their disabilities, and the negative prejudices and stigmas about disability placed on them by others (Johnson & Yarhouse, 2013).

Loneliness

Loneliness develops owing to various personal or circumstantial factors in an individual’s life and ‘is the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person’s network of social relationships is sufficiently deficient in either quality or quantity’ (Perlman & Peplau, 1984, p. 15). Loneliness is a negative feeling human experience, and usually involves sadness or anxiety (Rubenstein, Shaver, & Peplau, 1979). Individuals who live with chronic loneliness have been found to experience pessimism, mental illnesses, depression, addiction, and lethargy (Qualter, Quinton, Wagner, & Brown, 2009).

Existing studies found that people with disabilities struggle with negative social perceptions of disability as well as a lack of social support (Lee, 2002). In sum, people with disabilities experience loneliness due to various social, physical, and psychosocial factors (Hairi, Bulgiba, Cumming, Naganathan, & Mudla, 2010). In turn, loneliness increases physical and psychological stress, variables that negatively impact quality of life.

Depression

According to the World Health Organization (n.d., para. 1), ‘Depression is a common mood disorder characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness and poor concentration’. Many people have lived and continue to live with depression (American Academy of Family Physicians, 2018). Depression continuously influences a person’s psychological state, and usually has considerable negative impact on health (Nimrod, Kleiber, & Berdychevsky, 2012). In addition, lethargy, due to the physical constraints in daily life or secondary medical conditions increased the frequency of depression (Hairi et al., 2010; Rimmer, Padalabalanarayanan, & Malone, 2017). Various interventions can be implemented to treat depression, including psychological and psychosocial treatments as well as, antidepressant medications (World Health Organization, 2018). Previous research reported, however, that the outcomes of such interventions may not fully meet people’s expectations (Wasserman, 2006).

Recently, there is a growing desire for self-help treatments as alternatives to medical interventions such as pharmacological treatments (Nydegger, 2008). In this light, leisure activity is attracting a great deal of attention since

it is largely helpful for maintaining positive psychological health and well-being (Daley, 2008; Fullagar, 2008; Iwasaki, MacKay, & Mactavish, 2005). Specifically, leisure activities can play a more significant role in improving psychosocial health than medical treatment (Paluska & Schwenk, 2000) and could play a role in reducing depression in people with disabilities in order to improve the quality of their lives.

Social isolation

Social isolation is caused by the disconnection of social bonds. It is perceived as one of the decisive factors of an individual's well-being (Klinenberg, 2016; Zavaleta, Samuel, & Mills, 2017). Social isolation is classified into (a) objective isolation: 'tangible aspects of social isolation represented by physical separation from and an absence or deficiency of interaction with other people' (Taylor, Taylor, Nguyen, and Chatters, 2018, p. 232) and (b) subjective isolation: cognitive aspects of social isolation associated with relationships with social members or perceived involvement in a society (Valtorta, Kanaan, Gilbody, & Hanratty, 2016). Some scholars suggest that social isolation occurs due to "inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people" (Zavaleta et al., 2017, p. 370). Here, (a) the quantity of social relations is associated with the frequency of meeting people, and (b) the quality of social relations is associated with an individual's satisfaction with social relationships. Various approaches explain social isolation, and high social isolation is consistently detrimental to the psychological health of individuals (Klinenberg, 2016).

Studies indicate that quite a large number of people have negative thoughts about or attitudes toward disabilities (Livneh, 1982; UNICEF, 2012). This line of thinking builds on prejudices that socially isolate people with disabilities. Various studies reported that people with disabilities living in isolation may even go so far as to make extreme decisions such as self-injury and suicide (Cacioppo & Hawkey, 2009; Paul, Ayis, & Ebrahim, 2006). Social interactions that occur during recreational activities can enhance feelings of acceptance for individuals with disabilities, which in turn can reduce feelings of social isolation (Mahar, Cobigo, & Stuart, 2013; Veselinova, 2013).

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is a multidimensional concept that represents the degree of psychological well-being which one subjectively feels about his or her own life (Cummins, Gullone, & Lau, 2002). Researchers observed that leisure activities are closely associated with psychological happiness in able-bodied people, and these activities have a significant effect on satisfaction with life (Bowker, Gadbois, & Cornock, 2003).

Park (1999) argued that participation in leisure activities is highly important for people with disabilities as it not only increases the opportunity for exchange with others, but also helps with preventing functional decline and contributes to positive physical development as a means of rehabilitation. Park and Yu (1997) highlighted that leisure activity means much more than just having a good time for people with disabilities. Participation is an opportunity to perceive, develop, and express themselves. With respect to this, researchers reported that the participation by people with disabilities in leisure activities has a positive effect on their satisfaction with life (Fine, 1996; Mahar et al., 2013; Petryshen, Hawkins, & Fronchak, 2001; Rudnick, 2005; Veselinova, 2013).

Study significance and research questions

People with disabilities are in many ways able to lead typical lives, but there is a significant lack of leisure facilities and services to support their participation in physical activities. Participation in physical and leisure activities can function as a life stimulant for people with disabilities and help develop a positive mindset just as it does for people without disabilities (Janisse et al., 2004; Melin et al., 2003). Recent technological advances allow people to enjoy golf in a virtual fashion known as 'ubiquitous screen golf' without actually having to physically travel to a golf course (Choi, Greenwell, Hums, & Hambrick, 2019). This offers great opportunities and possibilities for people with disabilities to be more active. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate differences in the effect of screen golf participation on the psychosocial factors of self-esteem, isolation, depression, loneliness, and life satisfaction in people with and without disabilities. Results of the study also suggest a direction to improve the psychological health of people with disabilities.

Method

Participants and data collection

This study was conducted using non-probability purposive sampling in South Korea. The overarching research question in this study was 'does participation in screen golf have different effects on the psychological health (e.g.,

self-esteem, depression, loneliness, social isolation, and satisfaction with life) of people with and without disabilities?’ Survey respondents were first categorized into a group with disabilities and a group without disabilities, and each group was sub-categorized into participants and non-participants of screen golf based upon previous screen golf experience. Therefore, respondents were organized into four groups: (a) individuals without disabilities without screen golf experience, (b) individuals without disabilities with screen golf experience, (c) individuals with disabilities without screen golf experience, and (d) individuals with disabilities with screen golf experience.

This study applied the intercept data collection technique conducted at pre-assigned locations, where target population will be likely to congregate. Regardless of disability for individuals with previous screen golf experience, data was collected from five screen golf locations based in Seoul, and two public golf country clubs in the suburbs of Seoul. As for individuals with disabilities without previous screen golf experience, data were additionally collected from local community welfare centers providing welfare services for people with disabilities. Finally, data for people without disabilities and screen golf experience were collected in front of a major shopping mall in Seoul. Data were collected for three weeks in June 2018. All survey respondents were asked about previous experience with screen golf (i.e., have you played screen golf before?) and disabilities (do you have any physical disabilities?). The answers were important standards for assigning each respondent to one of the four groups established for this study. Individuals with intellectual disabilities were excluded from the survey for reasons including study purpose and objective, and ability to answer the questionnaire.

Instruments

Self-esteem was measured using the scale developed by Rosenberg (1965, 1989). The scale’s acceptable internal consistency ranged from .77 to .88 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and was used for the first time in 1965. The single-factor scale consisting of ten items (4-point Likert scale) measures one’s positive or negative thoughts or attitude toward oneself. The questionnaire is composed of five positive and five negative questions, and the negative ones were reverse-coded after the survey. A higher score indicates a higher level of higher self-esteem.

Depression was measured using the BDI-2nd Edition (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996) which was developed based on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961). This inventory has been used for over 30 years to measure depression symptoms with excellent internal consistency greater than .92 (Beck et al., 1996). It consists of 21 items, and a higher score means a higher degree of depression.

Loneliness was measured using a scale first developed by Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson (1978) with high reliability (internal consistency coefficient alpha ranging from .89 to .94), and later amended and complemented by Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980), and Russell (1996). The scale consists of 20 questions. Scores are calculated using the following conversion of how frequently one experienced loneliness (O = 3, S = 2, R = 1, N = 0). Here, ‘O’ = often, ‘S’ = sometimes, ‘R’ = rarely, and ‘N’ = never. Therefore, a higher score means a higher degree of loneliness.

Social isolation was measured using the tool ‘Social Isolation’ developed to measure the concept of human isolation by Dean (1961) (internal consistency coefficient alpha = .84). This tool consists of five questions on a 5-point Likert scale (1 point = ‘I strongly agree’, 3 points = ‘neutral’, and 5 points = ‘I strongly disagree’). A higher score means a higher level of social isolation.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) was used to measure satisfaction with life, showing high internal consistency with a value of 0.87. This instrument consists of five questions in total on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = ‘I strongly disagree’, 4 = ‘neither’ and 7 = ‘I strongly agree’). A higher score means a higher level of satisfaction with life.

Data analysis

First, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to ensure factor structure of the data utilized in this study. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach’s alpha in order to test the consistency of questions using the variables tested with the EFA. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), questions are considered to be internally consistent when Cronbach’s alpha is .70 or higher. A Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to investigate the difference of the effect of screen golf on the psychological health of people with and without disabilities according to five psychosocial factors (self-esteem, depression, loneliness, isolation, and satisfaction with life). For example, changes in self-esteem in the group without disabilities (i.e., individuals without disabilities with previous screen golf experience and those without any screen golf experience) were compared with each other after the experience of screen golf. Changes in self-esteem in the group with disabilities (i.e., individuals with disabilities with previous screen golf experience and those without any screen golf experience) were also compared with each other according to screen golf experience. In sum, MANOVAs were conducted twice.

Results

Socio-demographic statistics

A total of 350 survey questionnaires were distributed, and 302 copies were collected (response rate approximately 86%). After eliminating nine incomplete questionnaires, a total of 293 questionnaires consisting of 228 (77.8%) males and 65 (22.2%) females were retained. In terms of age, 33.8% ($n = 99$) of the sample was between the ages of 40 and 49 years old, followed by 50s ($n = 85$, 29%), 30s ($n = 48$, 16.4%), over 60 ($n = 43$, 14.7%) and 20s ($n = 18$, 6.1%). In terms of disability acquisition, 85% of respondents with disabilities ($n = 114$) had acquired disabilities, and 15% ($n = 20$) had congenital disabilities. Finally, the composition of the four groups according to disability and screen golf experience was: (a) individuals without disabilities without any screen golf experience ($n = 77$), (b) individuals without disabilities with previous screen golf experience ($n = 82$), (c) individuals with disabilities without any screen golf experience ($n = 62$), and (d) individuals with disabilities with previous screen golf experience ($n = 72$). Detailed information for socio-demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency distributions for demographic variables

Variables	Categories	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	228	77.8
	Female	65	22.2
Age	21–29	18	6.1
	30–39	48	16.4
	40–49	99	33.8
	50–59	85	29.0
	60+	43	14.7
	Disability	Without disabilities	159
With disabilities		134	46.0
Congenital		20	15.0
Acquired		114	85.0
Screen golf experience	Experienced	154	53.0
	Non-experienced	139	47.0

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

The exploratory factor analysis using the principal component analysis (PCA) with Varimax of depression (21 items), loneliness (20 items), self-esteem (10 items), life satisfaction (5 items), and social isolation (4 items) was conducted. The Kaiser Meyer-Olkin measure identified the sample adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = .941$ (Field, 2009). Barlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 13186.464$, $df = 1770$, $p < .001$) was statistically significant. Extracted 5 factors had eigenvalues greater than 1 and factor structure coefficients greater than .40. The factors accounted for 60.801% of the total variance.

Scale reliability

Alpha coefficient for the five mental health variables ranged from .832 to .954, including self-esteem ($\alpha = .866$), loneliness ($\alpha = .957$), depression ($\alpha = .968$), social isolation ($\alpha = .922$), and life satisfaction ($\alpha = .971$). All Cronbach's alpha estimates exceeded the .70 cut-off for good internal consistency reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)

People without disabilities context. The multivariate test indicated statistically significant differences based on the experience of people without disabilities with screen golf on the dependent variables [Wilks' lambda = .410, $F(5, 153) = 44.078$, $p = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .590$]. Based on the adjusted alpha level using the Bonferroni correction ($p = 0.05/5 = 0.01$), follow-up univariate tests for (a) Self-Esteem, $F(1, 157) = 149.071$, $p = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .487$ and (b) Life Satisfaction, $F(1, 157) = 75.681$, $p = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .325$ were statistically significant. However, the rest of the univariate tests were not statistically significant: (a) Social Isolation, $F(1, 157) = 1.337$, $p > .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .008$, (b) Depression, $F(1, 157) = 1.418$, $p > .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .009$, and (c) Loneliness, $F(1, 157) = .045$, $p > .01$,

partial $\eta^2 = .000$ (Table 2). As shown in Table 3, the two variables (i.e., self-esteem and life satisfaction) produced significant mean values in the group of individuals with screen golf experience, and the values were significantly higher than those of the group without screen golf experience.

Table 2. Results of MANOVA: Differences in five psychosocial factors of people without disabilities between experienced and non-experienced in screen golf

Source	DV	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Screen golf	Self-esteem	11.640	1	11.640	149.071	.000*	.487
	Social isolation	.293	1	.293	1.337	.249	.008
	Depression	.074	1	.074	1.418	.235	.009
	Loneliness	.002	1	.002	.045	.832	.000
	Life satisfaction	139.392	1	139.392	75.681	.000*	.325

Note. * $p < 0.01$.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for five psychosocial factors of groups for people without disability

Without disabilities	Self-esteem		Social isolation		Depression		Loneliness		Life satisfaction	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Experienced	3.462	0.268	1.573	0.535	1.555	0.221	2.372	0.212	5.507	1.064
Non-experienced	2.921	0.291	1.659	0.385	1.512	0.235	2.380	0.256	3.634	1.612

Note. Statistically significant mean differences between groups are in bold.

People with disabilities context. The multivariate test revealed statistically significant differences based on the experience of people with disabilities with screen golf on the dependent variables [Wilks' lambda = .430, $F(5, 128) = 33.985$, $p = 0.000$, partial $\eta^2 = .570$]. Based on the adjusted alpha level using the Bonferroni correction ($p = 0.05/5 = 0.01$), follow-up univariate tests for (a) Self-Esteem, $F(1, 132) = 75.023$, $p = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .362$, (b) Social Isolation, $F(1, 132) = 34.154$, $p = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .206$, (c) Depression, $F(1, 132) = 9.161$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = .065$, (d) Loneliness, $F(1, 132) = 20.464$, $p = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .134$, and (e) Life Satisfaction, $F(1, 132) = 50.840$, $p = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .278$, were statistically significant (Table 4). As shown in Table 5, individuals with disabilities with screen golf experience demonstrated high mean values in self-esteem and satisfaction with life, and low mean values in depression, isolation, and loneliness. However, depression, isolation, and loneliness are lower when depression, isolation, and depression scores are lower. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the experience of participating in screen golf had a positive effect on all five variables in individuals with disabilities.

Table 4. Results of MANOVA: Differences in five psychosocial factors of people with disabilities between experienced and non-experienced in screen golf

Source	DV	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Screen golf	Self-esteem	25.660	1	25.660	75.023	.000*	.362
	Social isolation	36.085	1	36.085	34.154	.000*	.206
	Depression	5.404	1	5.404	9.161	.003*	.065
	Loneliness	13.852	1	13.852	20.464	.000*	.134
	Life satisfaction	63.098	1	63.098	50.840	.000*	.278

Note. * $p < 0.01$.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Five Psychosocial Factors of Groups for People with Disability

With disabilities	Self-esteem		Social isolation		Depression		Loneliness		Life satisfaction	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Experienced	3.049	0.230	2.028	0.898	2.150	0.754	2.223	0.783	4.347	1.066
Non-experienced	2.171	0.824	3.069	1.161	2.552	0.784	2.868	0.867	2.971	1.168

Note. Statistically significant mean differences between groups are in bold.

Discussion

Modern technological developments achieved through computers have brought dramatic changes to our daily lives and greatly impacted leisure industries (Suh & Pedersen, 2010). Modern computer technologies minimize constraints existing in access to golf as a leisure activity through ‘screen golf’, and this digital form of the sport now enjoys great popularity (Kerr-Dineen, 2018). It holds great potential as it allows people of all abilities to enjoy golf.

Research indicates that 90% of people with disabilities in South Korea live with mild disabilities and can enjoy leisure activities on their own (Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2005). Considering the fact that anybody can experience permanent or temporary disabilities at any point in life, more attention and efforts are certainly needed to support people with disabilities to help them lead physically and emotionally healthy lives.

This study analyzed the comparative positive effects of participating in the leisure activity of screen golf on five psychosocial variables that represent psychological health including self-esteem, isolation, depression, loneliness, and satisfaction with life. In subjects without disabilities, the group with screen golf experience showed higher self-esteem and satisfaction with life than the group without screen golf experience, while no differences were observed in isolation, depression, and loneliness. In subjects with disabilities, all five variables exhibited positive results in the group with screen golf experience compared to the group without screen golf experience. These findings support the results of existing studies that participation in leisure activities helps maintain or increase psychological well-being generally (Nimrod et al., 2012; Slutzky & Simpkins, 2009) and for people with disabilities specifically (Mgulwa & Young, 2014).

This study investigated the effect of ‘ubiquitous leisure activity’ in the form of screen golf on the psychological health of participants. More specifically, it demonstrated the difference in the effect between the groups with and without disabilities. All variables had statistically positive significant differences in the group with disabilities different from the group without disabilities. In relation to this, Park (1999), Mahar et al. (2013), and Veselinova (2013) all posited that participation by people with disabilities in leisure activities creates opportunities for them to have more interactions with others. Further studies suggested that participation in leisure activities greatly impacts emotional stability since these activities are a simple means for entertainment which allow people to express and develop themselves (Fontaine, 2000; Landers, 1997; Park & Yu, 1997). The current study is significant as it showed that while the development of technology helps people without disabilities, more importantly, these technological advances and the opportunities they create have an even greater positive effect for people with disabilities.

Motivations of people with disabilities for participating in leisure activities are not significantly different from those of people without disabilities (Dinomais et al., 2010). People with disabilities are equally aware of the necessity and importance of leisure activities regardless of their disabilities (Ponchillia, Armbruster, & Wiebold, 2005). However, they participate less frequently in physical activity than people without disabilities, often due to practical reasons (Darcy, Lock, & Taylor, 2017) and physical and attitudinal barriers (Calder, Sole, & Mulligan, 2018).

Screen golf with its advanced technology will offer more opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy golf as a leisure activity. It is encouraging that there are screen golf competitions for people with disabilities (Jung, 2018). Additionally, screen golf benefits people with disabilities beyond simply offering an outlet for physical activity. Participants can enjoy screen golf with friends and family in a social setting outside of the home (Choi et al., 2019). Others’ evaluation of an individual is a very important factor for emotional health (Macdonald & Leary, 2005), and screen golf offers the opportunity for social exchange.

It is crucial for every individual to maintain psychological health. Leisure activity alone cannot be a panacea for people with disabilities, but it is still important that sport be positioned as a highly effective tool to help (United

Nations, n.d.). As demonstrated in this study, screen golf can play an important role as an effective medium for people with disabilities to pursue emotional well-being and a better life.

This study analyzed comparative differences in the effects of participation by groups with and without disabilities in the ubiquitous leisure activity of screen golf on five psychosocial variables. While a longitudinal research design would be useful to further understand the results, that method was not feasible at this time. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth cross-sectional study to address this weakness in the future. This study applied a non-probability sampling technique, thus making it difficult to generalize the results. Future studies should employ more varied sampling techniques to address these concerns.

Additionally, as clarified in the research design, the respondents of this study were limited to those with physical disabilities. More specifically, in addition to those with mental disabilities, those with severe physical disabilities and mobility difficulties were unable to participate in the survey. It should be acknowledged that there are limitations to the contribution of this study for those who cannot participate in new leisure activities by applying virtual reality due to severe disabilities. Therefore, despite meaningful results on physical activities and the health of the people with disabilities, we could not arrive at a generalized result that can be applied to all people with disabilities. Future researchers would greatly benefit from designing studies applicable regardless of the type of disability.

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Foreign ownership and local fans: Turkish football fans' perspective

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

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Abstract

Foreign investors have been very active in football clubs in many different countries. These clubs see significant benefits from foreign investment. However, in Turkey, this practice has not yet been implemented. Furthermore, there has been no general discussion about the applicability of this system in Turkish clubs, despite almost all Turkish football clubs being in a state of financial turmoil. To fill this void, this study aims to research the views of Turkish football fans regarding the possible sale of their club to a foreign investor. A total of 1172 football fans across Turkey completed a questionnaire form for the research. The distributions of fans' views were analyzed by forming crosstabs and using the chi-square test of independence. A total of 66.8% of Turkish fans who participated in the research are against the possible sale of their club to a foreign investor, while 33.2% of the fans support this situation. Additionally, 55.5% of the fans think they have adequate information about club ownership, whereas 44.5% of them think they do not have adequate information. Also, desire for financial return, sporting success, and corporate management were found as reasons to support foreign ownership while nationalism and a sense of belonging to a club were found as reasons to oppose foreign ownership. The study indicates that fans oppose or support the idea of foreign ownership for various reasons. The study describes these factors in the context of past studies and also presents the path for future research.

Keywords: Ownership, football club ownership, foreign ownership, Turkish fans

Introduction

Sports clubs are institutions established based on certain rules (laws, codes, regulations, contracts, etc.), whose members have certain forms of authority and responsibilities (president, board of directors, auditor, and members) and provide services to the community with either amateur or professional athletic branches (Genç, 1999). Usually, these clubs have facilities and equipment with which all age groups can participate in sports and aim for the training

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of high-performance athletes (Breuer et al., 2015). In this context, football clubs can be defined as organizations that are established under the statute of association and that aim to operate at the amateur or professional level of football without pursuing commercial ends.

Dramatic changes have occurred in football since the 1990s (Hamil et al., 2007). The playing field has thus become a metaphor for the competition between communities, cities, and nations (Chehabi, 2006). Football emerged not only socially, but also financially. When looking to the past, the significant revenues of clubs that operated under the statute of association were generally in the form of proceeds from match tickets and acquired from player transfers (Aydın, Turgut, & Bayırlı, 2007; Kelly, Lewis, & Mortimer, 2012). The fees paid to players and player transfers constituted the most significant expense item of clubs (Aglietta, Andreff, & Drut, 2010; Kelly et al., 2012). Since associations were unable to engage in operations for the pursuit of profit (Aydın et al., 2007), football clubs couldn't carry out commercial operations (Devecioğlu et al., 2012). However, even as the revenues coming from match tickets remained as the main source of revenue for many clubs (Morrow, 2003), many new sources of revenue such as commercial product sales, commercial partnerships, media revenues, sponsorship revenues, and advertising revenues began to emerge because of the fast and comprehensive commercialization of football (Aydın et al., 2007; Hamil & Chadwick, 2010; Harvey, Mangan, & Majumdar, 2005; Morrow, 2003). Clubs set out on the road to commercialization and corporatization to be able to conduct these commercial operations that they were unable to carry out under the statute of association and thus attain a share at the highest level of the increasing and diversifying revenues in the football industry while effectively managing the growing budgets that came along with these acquired revenues. Management structures of clubs experienced changes in relation to the changes that football and football clubs underwent in this process of commercialization, and different management models emerged. Within these practices, foreign ownership became one of the most significant practices implemented in many European countries in the past quarter century, particularly in countries where football occupies an important space, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and France. However, in Turkey no club has been acquired or is set to be acquired by a foreign investor to date.

Turkey & foreign ownership of football clubs

The concept of ownership, according to the Turkish Language Association (2015), is defined as “the right to be able to use something possessed as desired within the framework of the law.” Ownership is expressed in the first paragraph of article 683 of the Turkish Civil Code No. 4721 (2001) as “the authority to use, utilize, and dispose as desired within the limits of legal order over something in one's possession.”

With reference to these definitions, the ownership of a football club can be expressed in the form of the right to keep a football club within legal limitations and to use and dispose of the power of management over the club. In other words, ownership of a football club indicates possession of the right to conduct formal and legal transactions with regard to the club. Pursuant to this definition, foreign ownership is a scenario in which the ownership of a club is assumed by an investor who is a citizen of another country. The foreign investor can be an individual, a family, or a corporate entity in this scenario.

Globalization allowed foreign investors to invest in the field of sport, and one of their main sources of investment is football club ownership. The purchase of Chelsea FC in England by Roman Abramovich, the purchase of Manchester United FC by the American Glazer family, and the purchase of FC Internazionale Milano in Italy by the Chinese Suning Commerce Group all constitute examples of foreign individual ownership, foreign family ownership, and foreign corporate ownership models, respectively. These takeovers brought fame and money for the owners, but also proved beneficial for the structure and economic condition of the clubs. For instance, a Pakistani-born American purchased the English Premier League football club Fulham FC and not only improved the economic condition of the club but also increased his own fame as he became the first man of Pakistani origin to purchase a Premier League club (Hassan, 2013).

The substantial commercialization of football as an industry in the world has also brought up the costs necessary to be able to maintain the lives of clubs. For example, the salaries paid to football players began to double and triple. This situation has pushed the clubs to seek out greater amounts of financing. This is why many clubs or their shareholders who realized that they wouldn't be able to make the necessary investments to attain high-cost players and compete with other rivals were in the position of having to sell most of their shares in the club to foreign investors (Wilson, Plumley, & Ramchandani, 2013). In other words, in order for clubs to be able to find the sources of financing they need, they have gone down the road of utilizing the high capital ventures of foreign ownership. That is why many clubs throughout Europe (i.e., in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Italy in most major leagues) are working under foreign ownership.

The Egyptian businessman Mohamed Al Fayed initiated foreign ownership as a first in the global world of football by purchasing Fulham FC in the United Kingdom in 1997. Six years after this, in 2003, Russian businessman Roman Abramovich purchased Chelsea FC, again in the United Kingdom. Following the success that Roman Abramovich demonstrated with Chelsea FC, Manchester United, Liverpool, Manchester City, Aston Villa, West Ham, Portsmouth, Sunderland, Fulham, and Derby became either wholly or partly controlled by rich individuals from outside the United Kingdom (Nauright & Ramfjord, 2010; Best, 2013), and by 2010, foreign investors owned half of all the Premier League clubs (Rohde & Breuer, 2017). In Italy, another big country for football, as can be seen with teams like FC Inter and AC Milan, the foreign ownership race began as well. The purchase of Paris Saint Germain FC by Nasser Al-Khelaifi and the purchase of Malaga CF by Qatar sheikh Abdullah Al-Thani constitute examples of the introduction of foreign ownership in France and Spain, respectively.

As mentioned before, foreign ownership has occurred with football clubs in many different countries that occupy a significant space in the world of football, such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Italy. These clubs have experienced significant benefits from the introduction of foreign ownership and provide for great capital venture both for their clubs and their countries.

Nonetheless, fans do not always welcome a change of ownership, especially when ownership is going to a foreigner. This is because professional football clubs originated from a variety of different forms of institutions such as schools, churches, and workplaces (Walters & Hamil, 2009). This criterion allows for the development of an emotional bond between fans and clubs. Therefore, when an outsider (a foreign owner in this case) enters the picture, people resist this change. For instance, Manchester United supporters from England protested against American ownership as this was perceived to be against Manchester United's British identity (Schoonderwoerd, 2011; Best, 2013).

Generally, the development and transformation that football and football clubs experience are subsequently reflected in Turkey. In other words, football in Turkey faces similar changes and transformations as football in other countries. Similar to many clubs around the world, it can be said that most Turkish football clubs are drowning in debt. There are large gaps between their total revenues and expenses, and they are struggling with large debt (TRT-SPOR, 2019). Most of them don't have enough money to pay for their operational costs. According to Tuğrul Akşar, a banker specializing in Turkish football economics, the total debts of Turkish football clubs have reached TL 14.5 billion (approximately €2 billion at the current rates) and continue to rise (Akşar, 2019).

According to the latest UEFA benchmarking report of 2018, the Turkish Super League reported a major hit with a loss of €263 million. Additionally, the three biggest football clubs of Turkey were amongst the 20 European clubs with the highest net debt. In this report, Fenerbahçe was ranked sixth with €334 million, Beşiktaş had €183 million and was in fifteenth place, and Galatasaray took seventeenth place with €175 million net debt (UEFA, 2018). In this context, when considering the difficult economic situation in which many of the clubs in Turkey find themselves (Sönmez, 2019), it is thought that foreign investment in football club ownership as implemented in the important countries of the world of football will be an unavoidable topic to be discussed in the near future in Turkey.

Football clubs are generally established under the statute of association and continue their operations mostly under this statute in Turkey (Devecioğlu, 2004) instead of corporatization. According to Turkish Association Law (2004), associations cannot be sold to any individuals. Therefore, football clubs under the statute of association cannot be sold to any investors unless they incorporate. However, some Turkish clubs like Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, and some others have been incorporated and floated in the stock market (Akyüz, 2005). These clubs can sell their shares to any individual, but within some limitations. Individual investors are not allowed to have more than a 49% stake in a Turkish football club, leaving 51% of these clubs under the control of the association due to their legislation.

Regarding these kinds of statutory regulations, foreign ownership has not yet been introduced in Turkey. Furthermore, despite almost all Turkish football clubs being in a state of financial turmoil, there is no discussion of whether this prospect will be implemented in Turkey. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to research the views of Turkish football fans regarding the possible sale of their club to a foreign investor. The study aimed to identify fans in detail who welcomed or resisted the idea of foreign investment in Turkish clubs. This investigation is twofold. The first goal is to find out if Turkish fans are in favor of selling their favorite Turkish club to a foreign investor. The second is to find out if Turkish fans have sufficient information regarding all aspects of foreign ownership. It is expected that the study will contribute to the literature with theoretical information that emerges regarding the topic and will lay the groundwork so that this subject may be discussed in academia or in the public opinion of Turkish football. This study is a pioneering study in the field as, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has

addressed the current topic. In this context, the current study would provide a foundation for this important topic as foreign investment in a football club is an attractive venture for international investors.

Method

The population and sample of the research

The population of the research consists of all the football fans in Turkey. The research sample consists of 1172 football fans across Turkey. The convenience sampling method is used for the determination of the sample of the research. In the convenience sampling technique, the researcher tries to collect data from the easiest and most accessible subjects until the sample size needed for the research is reached (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2014). This technique is preferred because it is easier, cheaper, and faster than most other sampling techniques (Dörnyei, 2007).

Data collection

Data was collected both face-to-face and online. The final sample size was 379 football fans face-to-face and 793 fans online across Turkey. At the time of data collection, it was ensured that participants 1) consider themselves football fans, 2) have at least one favorite Turkish football team, and 3) have watched at least one game (live or on television) of their favorite team during the current season. The purpose of using these criteria was to select legitimate “football fans” for this study as defined by Crawford (2004).

A questionnaire was designed to acquire the data. The questionnaire was formed using both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed by the researchers and was used as a data collection tool in the study. The purpose of including both types of questions was to understand the reasons behind the fans’ views of foreign ownership proposals. There are various demographic variables in the first section of the questionnaire form; in the second section, there are categorical questions about the views of fans regarding the sale of football clubs to foreign investors. It is important to mention that the questionnaire was based upon three big clubs (i.e., Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray) and the Anatolian Clubs. The study follows these attributes as the football teams of Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray are based in Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey, and are known as the most successful sports clubs in Turkey. They have a great rivalry and are usually the main dominant contenders for the title of the Turkish Super League. Naturally, they have the most fans in Turkey. Apart from these three big clubs, the other teams in Turkey are called the “Anatolian Clubs,” and almost all of them are based in different Anatolian cities. Consequently, because they have similar properties, these fans were bracketed together and gathered under the single category of the “Anatolian Clubs,” apart from the fans of the big three clubs.

Data analysis

The cross-sectional screening method was used as the research method. This is one of the general screening methods that aims to describe the past or present state of the research topic without attempting to change or influence it (Karasar, 2008) and to take any photograph of the universe at any moment.

The distribution of the obtained data was determined firstly by forming frequency tables pursuant to various demographic variables. Distributions of fans’ views on each question regarding the possible sale of their club to a foreign investor were analyzed by forming crosstabs. The chi-square independence test was used as a statistical method in the research because it aims to examine the relationship between categorical variables consisting of different categories (Karagöz, 2017). Also, the Yates correction for continuity was used for the calculation of the chi-square statistic of 2x2-sized crosstabs. Licensed IBM SPSS 23 packaged software was used to perform the statistical methods.

Results

The results of the study are depicted in this section in the forms of tables generated after data analysis.

Demographics (Table 1).

The table presented above shows the frequency and percentage values of gender, age, educational background, marital status, and supported team variables used in the research as demographic variables.

Table 1. Frequency table of demographic variables

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	845	72.1
Female	327	27.9
Age	Frequency	Percentage
Under 20 years of age	358	30.5
21–30 years of age	604	51.5
31–40 years of age	159	13.6
Over the age of 41	51	4.4
Educational background	Frequency	Percentage
High school	101	8.6
University	951	81.1
Postgraduate	120	10.3
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarried	943	80.5
Married	229	19.5
Supported team	Frequency	Percentage
Galatasaray	400	34.1
Fenerbahçe	275	23.5
Beşiktaş	175	14.9
Anatolian football clubs	322	27.5
Total	1172	100.0

Foreign ownership acceptance/rejection (Table 2–9).

Table 2. Frequency table for adequate information about foreign ownership and support of it

Do you have adequate information about foreign ownership?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	650	55.5
No	522	44.5
Do you support the sale of your club to a foreign investor?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	389	33.2
No	783	66.8

Table 2 shows that a slight majority of the fans think they have adequate information about foreign ownership, whereas a slight minority of them think they do not have adequate information. Moreover, two-thirds of the fans are against the possible sale of their club to a foreign investor, while one-third of them support it.

As highlighted in the table 3, the most rated reasons for supporting a possible sale were the financial return, sportive success, and better corporate management that foreign ownership offers clubs, respectively. On the other hand, nationalistic attitudes and the thought that the “club only belongs to fans and in the case of a possible sale, fans will lose their sense of belonging to the club” were the most rated reasons for not supporting foreign ownership.

Table 3. Frequency table relevant to the distribution of supporting-not supporting status according to reasons given

Reason	Supporting		Not supporting	
	Frequency	Reason	Frequency	Reason
Financial return	134 (37.6%)	Nationalism	438 (72.3%)	
Corporate management	94 (26.4%)	Sense of belonging to club	155 (25.6%)	
Sportive success	122 (34.3%)	Other	13 (2.1%)	
Other	6 (1.7%)			
Total	356 (100%)	Total	606 (100%)	

Table 4. Crosstab relevant to the distribution of supporting-not supporting status according to gender

		Supporting status		Total	χ^2	p
		Yes	No			
Gender	Female	48 (14.7%)	279 (85.3%)	327 (100%)	68.941	0.000
	Male	341 (40.4%)	504 (59.6%)	845 (100%)		
Total		389 (33.2%)	783 (66.8%)	1172		

The table presents the results showing that male fans have more positive and supportive attitudes than female fans for the possible sale of their club to a foreign investor.

Table 5. Crosstab relevant to the distribution of supporting-not supporting status according to age groups

		Supporting status		Total	χ^2	p
		Yes	No			
Age groups	Under 20	90 (25.1%)	268 (74.9%)	358 (100%)	16.432	0.000
	21–30	215 (35.6%)	389 (64.4%)	604 (100%)		
	Over 31	84 (40.0%)	126 (60.0%)	210 (100%)		
Total		389 (33.2%)	783 (66.8%)	1172		

The table reveals that young fans have a more negative and faultfinding attitude than middle-aged and older fans toward the possible sale of their club.

Table 6. Crosstab relevant to distribution of supporting-not supporting status according to educational background

		Supporting status		Total	χ^2	p
		Yes	No			
Educational Background	High school	27 (26.7%)	74 (73.3%)	101 (100%)	5.094	0.078
	University	313 (32.9%)	638 (67.1%)	951 (100%)		
	Postgraduate	49 (40.8%)	71 (59.2%)	120 (100%)		
Total		389 (33.2%)	783 (66.8%)	1172		

As can be seen in Table 6, fans with a high level of education have a more positive and supportive attitude than fans with less education, although there is not a statistically significant difference.

Table 7. Crosstab relevant to the distribution of supporting-not supporting status according to marital status

		Supporting status		Total	χ^2	p
		Yes	No			
Marital status	Unmarried	299 (31.7%)	644 (68.3%)	327 (100%)	4.456	0.035
	Married	90 (39.3%)	139 (60.7%)	845 (100%)		
Total		389 (33.2%)	783 (66.8%)	1172		

Table 7 illustrates that married fans are more positive and supportive than unmarried fans about the possible sale of their club.

Table 8. Crosstab relevant to the distribution of supporting-not supporting status according to the club supported

		Supporting status		Total	χ^2	p
		Yes	No			
Clubs	Galatasaray	143 (35.8%)	257 (64.2%)	400 (100%)	5.831	0.120
	Fenerbahçe	76 (27.6%)	199 (72.4%)	275 (100%)		
	Beşiktaş	56 (32%)	119 (68%)	175 (100%)		
	Anatolian Football Clubs	114 (35.4%)	208 (64.6%)	322 (100%)		
Total		389 (33.2%)	783 (66.8%)	1172		

The results in Table 8 highlight that the observed differences according to supported club are not statistically significant. Still, it is observed that the fans most opposed to a possible sale are Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş fans, while the fans of Galatasaray and the Anatolian Clubs lead the way in support of foreign ownership.

Table 9. Frequency table relevant to preferred country

If your club were to be sold to a foreign investor, which country would you prefer?	Frequency	Percentage
Azerbaijan	163	13.9%
Saudi Arabia	133	11.4%
Qatar	98	8.4%
Spain	91	7.8%
Germany	89	7.6%
England	72	6.1%

According to these findings, Azerbaijan is the most preferred country. Even though Azerbaijan is not a country with great sportive successes in football, it could be that fans prefer Azerbaijan as they view Azerbaijan as being closer to their own country and are thus acting out of nationalism. It could also be that many prefer Saudi Arabia and Qatar in second and third place after Azerbaijan because they believe the investors of these two countries could provide financial returns to the club through the monetary power they have. Finally, Spain, Germany, and England are ranked in fourth, fifth, and sixth place, respectively. It can be suggested that the cause of this situation is that these countries have achieved success in football and have succeeded in terms of the corporate management of their clubs.

*Adequate information regarding foreign ownership (Table 10–11)***Table 10.** Crosstab relevant to the distribution of supporting status pursuant to having adequate information

		Supporting status		Total	χ^2	p
		Yes	No			
Adequate Information	Yes	280 (72%)	370 (47.3%)	650	63.322	0.000
	No	109 (28%)	413 (52.7%)	522		
Total		389 (100%)	783 (100%)	1172		

It is apparent from this table that the majority of fans who are against the possible sale of their club do not have adequate information about foreign ownership, while the majority of fans who support it have adequate information and thus support foreign ownership consciously.

Table 11. Crosstab relevant to the distribution of having adequate information according to gender

		Adequate information		Total	χ^2	p
		Yes	No			
Gender	Female	99 (30.3%)	228 (69.7%)	327 (100%)	115.054	0.000
	Male	551 (65.2%)	294 (34.8%)	845 (100%)		
Total		650 (55.5%)	522 (44.5%)	1172		

According to the findings in Table 11, while the majority of male fans have adequate information about foreign ownership, the majority of female fans do not.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to research the views of Turkish football fans regarding the possible sale of their favored football club to a foreign investor. The study aimed to identify fans in detail who welcome or resist the idea of foreign investment in Turkish football clubs. In this context, one of the primary findings of the study indicates that Turkish football fans hold negative views of foreign ownership in football and are against such an implementation. It can be seen through the example of other countries that both positive and negative reactions to foreign ownership have occurred. For example, the purchase of Manchester United FC by American investor Malcom Glazer in 2005 in England was met with an overwhelmingly negative response by fans. Despite the club winning the championship that season, a majority of the fans protested against Glazer when he came to the stadium. Moreover, some fans took it a step further and even established a new club with the name “Football Club of United Manchester.” The new club played its matches in the league with around 3,000 spectators (Nauright & Ramfjord, 2010; Schoonderwoerd, 2011). This was not the only case in this regard, as SV Austria Salzburg supporters also created their own team in 2005. Furthermore, similar situations have occurred in Croatia, Romania, Poland, and Israel (Cocieru, Delia, & Katz, 2019). In the purchase of Aston Villa FC in 2006 in England by another American investor, Randy Lerner, the exact opposite of the Glazer example occurred (Coombs & Osborne, 2012), as fans welcomed the new owner very warmly. Lerner was met like a hero in the stadium by the club’s fans, who thought that he would be able to get better players and modernize the club’s facilities (Nauright & Ramfjord, 2010). Members of academia have described this phenomenon by explaining that a football club represents a cultural symbol to fans that saves individuals from alienation and arouses the collective identity of the individuals of its local community (Bi, 2015).

The findings of the study show that male fans approach the possible sale of their favored club more positively and supportively than female fans. It is thought that different levels of knowledge regarding club ownership among males and females may have an effect in this instance. In other words, male fans probably have more knowledge about football and their clubs. Therefore, they are more aware of the possible gains their clubs could experience following

foreign investment. This phenomenon can also be connected with the strongest gender stereotype that females are more emotional than men (Brescoll, 2016; Shields, 2002). This stereotype has been discussed in various professions (i.e., regarding female athletes (Hasaan & Kerem, 2017), office workers (Bauer, 2015)) and cultures (i.e., Turkish females (Kutlu & Akbulut, 2018); Asian females (Chong et al., 2006)). In this vein, we can claim that females may have dismissed the idea of foreign ownership because they are more attached to their club's national identity.

Another finding of the research can be seen in the supporting-not supporting status of foreign ownership among different age groups. The rate of opposition to foreign ownership was higher for the under 20 (74.9%) and 21–30 (64.4%) age groups, which can be referred to as the younger age groups, than the other age groups (60.0%), which can be evaluated as middle-aged and elderly. This result reveals that younger fans oppose the sale of their club to a foreign investor more than middle-aged and elderly fans. This difference may be due to the middle-aged and elderly fans having more knowledge about any subject and acting according to this information while making a decision on any topic, while the younger fans have less knowledge and act with more emotion. With reference to this hypothesis, it can be said of this finding related to age and the aforementioned finding that the idea that “those who don't have sufficient knowledge about foreign ownership generally have negative views and those fans with sufficient knowledge mostly support it” is consistent.

The results of the study also reveal that the fans from all the clubs in question opposed the sale of their club to a foreign investor. The findings of the study in question are consistent with the findings of this study, and it is seen that those satisfied with the management style of their club were opposed to the sale of their club to a foreign investor and that those who were unsatisfied with the management style of their club supported the club's sale to a foreign investor. The reason behind Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş fans' satisfaction is the clubs' management style. This is an important finding that shows when fans are happy with the management style of their club, they become more loyal to the club.

The results of the study show that fans would most support their club being sold to a foreign investor from Azerbaijan. Saudi Arabia and Qatar follow Azerbaijan, respectively. It is important to mention that Azerbaijan is considered a strong ally of Turkey, and the two are often considered one nation of two states (Soltanov, 2016). Therefore, it can be claimed that a large majority of the fans who oppose foreign ownership are acting with feelings of nationalism as a reason for their opposition and only want Turkish managers to direct their clubs. In this context, it is thought that the reason Azerbaijan is fans' first preferred choice should their club be sold to a foreign investor despite not being a country with great success in football is that Turkish fans are acting with emotions of patriotism and see Azerbaijan as being closer to themselves. As was reported in the findings of the study, the reasons for supporting foreign ownership were a financial return for the club, sportive success, and a desire for better corporate management. It can be said in this respect that the reason Saudi Arabia and Qatar ranked second and third on the list of preferences is because they would provide a financial return thanks to the monetary strength the investors of these two countries have. Spain, Germany, and England take fourth, fifth, and sixth places, respectively. It is thought that the effects of these countries having experienced sportive success in football and their clubs being seen as successful in terms of corporate management come into play here. This is in line with past studies, as Edensor and Millington (2008) mention that Manchester City FC fans welcome foreign ownership in the case of a city as it has the potential to bring in lots of money that can help with achieving success. Furthermore, Crystal Palace football club fans welcomed the American owner's takeover because the club was about to be liquidated (BBC, 2010). In another case, Liverpool fans threatened club management with a financial boycott and welcomed new American owners (Williams, 2012).

Interestingly, the results of the study indicate that that majority of fans are not sure how exactly foreign ownership works. These findings show that fans with insufficient knowledge regarding the benefits or detriments of foreign ownership generally hold prejudiced views and are against its implementation. Thus it can be assumed that negativity regarding foreign ownership is more about a social issue (i.e., nationalism) than business or economics. It can be seen that fans with sufficient knowledge about foreign ownership mostly support it. Past studies have identified that fans often reject foreign ownership because of sociological issues. For instance, Manchester United supporters from England considered the American takeover as a shame to their English identity (Brown, 2007). It is important to mention here that fans have protested to save their national identity regardless of foreign or local ownership. For instance, Croatian fans protested against the President of the Republic of Croatia, the late Franjo Tuđman, for the name change imposed on their football club (Vrcan, 2002).

When looking at whether both genders possess sufficient knowledge on the topic of club ownership, it can be seen that a majority of the male fans in the study had sufficient knowledge regarding club ownership, whereas a majority of female fans did not. In this respect, it can be said that the high opposition rate of female fans for the

possible sale of their club to a foreign investor could originate from their inadequate information about club ownership. On the other hand, the rate of support increases in male fans, the majority of whom have adequate information about how ownership works. These findings relating to gender confirm the study's finding that those who have insufficient knowledge regarding the foreign ownership scenario are opposed in a prejudiced manner. This finding is in line with past studies: Whelehan (2000) suggests that women's progression into sports that are male dominated (i.e., football) has been a very slow and difficult process because organized sport was created to bolster a sagging ideology of "men's natural superiority" over women (Crawford & Gosling, 2004).

It is thought that the findings of this study will make important contributions to the literature on how fans view the foreign ownership of football clubs. The current study highlights that fans oppose the idea of foreign ownership for their favorite clubs. Even with the current economic difficulties, fans are happy with the current situation of their club. Nationalism is a major obstacle for fans in favor of a foreign owner. Furthermore, the results revealed that fans, both those who support and do not support the idea, are not well informed regarding the details of foreign ownership. With the findings of the revelation of the current views of Turkish fans about foreign ownership of football clubs, it was expected that this study would lay important groundwork for new and comprehensive studies to be conducted so that the positive and negative aspects of foreign ownership can be revealed. These future studies will contribute to the ability to effectively conduct discussions that will likely emerge in the near future regarding the applicability of foreign ownership in Turkey. In light of the scientific studies to be conducted, more accurate analyses could be conducted with regard to the potential benefits and detriments of foreign ownership, and a more accurate decision could be made on whether or not to support its implementation.

Limitation and future research

It is acknowledged that the current study is of an initial level and provides a future prospect for new research. The current study adopted a statistical tool suited for a pioneer study. However, future research could adopt better tools to get more precise results. Also, the current study adopted a questionnaire that was suitable for the demographic nature of the study. However, in the future, studies could be established with a better understanding in the context of the questionnaire and results.

Also, although the study attempted to present multiple comparative analysis, it is not possible to cover all aspects in a single study. For instance, the current study is based on clubs in Istanbul and the Anatolian football clubs, whose fans have different backgrounds, experiences, and behaviors. The general background of Istanbul with its massive tourism, wealth, and openness to some western social values and behaviors could generate a different reality compared to other geographical regions of Turkey that are more conservative. This leads to the possibility of a separate comparative research study concerning the differences between teams from Istanbul and Anatolia.

Ethics approval and informed consent

Ethical approval for this study was obtained via the Ethics Committee of Institute of Research & Advanced Studies, Multan, Pakistan (Approval no: SC-RA- 010120).

Competing interests

There is potential conflict of interest for any of the authors to declare.

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The effect of basic psychological needs satisfaction on intrinsic regulation is moderated by hedonic and eudaimonic motives: a longitudinal investigation among youth athletes in Japan

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

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Abstract

The current study was conducted to examine the interactive effects of basic psychological needs satisfaction (BPNS), hedonic and eudaimonic motives on intrinsic regulation. To assess the causal relationship, two-wave time-lagged data collection was employed. A total of 159 youth athletes in Japan participated in online surveys twice (three-month time lag between two data points). The results indicated that the effect of BPNS on intrinsic regulation was moderated by hedonic and eudaimonic motives. Interestingly, BPNS negatively affected intrinsic regulation among youth athletes with low hedonic motives. This negative impact was further augmented when the level of eudaimonic motives was higher. Conversely, BPNS positively influenced intrinsic regulation among youth athletes with high hedonic motives. This positive impact of BPNS was more prominent when eudaimonic motives were lower. Overall, the findings suggest that when intrinsic regulation is the central concern, youth athletes should focus more on seeking enjoyment while putting self-development aside to maximize the positive impact of BPNS.

Key words: Motivation, psychology, sport development, youth sport

Introduction

In the past decade, the Japanese government has strived to promote sport to facilitate a more active lifestyle (Japan Sports Agency, 2015) and to develop elite athletes in an effort to improve the global presence of the nation (Funahashi, De Bosscher, & Mano, 2015). However, it is also reported that the number of sport participants among Japanese adolescents is decreasing. For example, according to the Nippon Junior High School Physical Culture Association (NJPA, 2017), the number of sport participants in the middle school age group has decreased by seven percent over the past decade. This trend is considered problematic because numerous studies have demonstrated that sport participation can provide physical, psychological and social benefits that can lead to the development of healthy behaviors among youth (c.f., Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013; Hebert, Møller, Andersen, & Wedderkopp, 2015). To overcome such a challenging situation, building a more sophisticated sport development program is necessary.

The sport development system should serve two important roles: 1) to increase the number of sport participants and the quality of engagement, and 2) to facilitate a more positive development for the participants (Green,

2005). Accordingly, as motivation is a key component of sport continuation (e.g., Roberts, 2012) and development (Ryan & Deci, 2017), the present study focused on youths' motivation in the context of Japanese sport. Self-Determination Theory (SDT: Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017) posits that people have the potential for development. According to SDT, intrinsic regulation is the highest quality of behavioral regulatory processes that lead youth to obtaining important outcomes for athlete development such as sport continuation (e.g., Jõesaar, Hein, & Hagger, 2011; Rottensteiner, Tolvanen, Laakso, & Konttinen, 2015). Moreover, Ryan and Deci (2017) argued that the associations of basic psychological need satisfaction with outcome variables are affected by the individual difference such as personality and personal motivational orientation (e.g., Deci, & Ryan, 2012; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Thus, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the moderating effect of personal motives (i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic motives) on the relationship between basic psychological need satisfaction and intrinsic regulation.

Basic psychological needs and intrinsic regulation

SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017) argues the psychological mechanism of *internalization*, which is the process of improvement in the quality of behavioral regulation. For example, a person starts playing a sport to make a friend (an external reason). After Friendships form with teammates, the persons' behaviors (participating in sport; e.g., basketball) would be regulated by more internal reasons such as having a fun or the enjoyment of playing itself. Thus, in this case, the behavior becomes regulated by internal reasons after fulfilling one of his basic psychological needs (i.e., relatedness). According to the extensive research and the development of the mechanism of the internalization, Ryan and Deci (2002, 2017) found that satisfaction of basic psychological needs (BPNS) enhances the quality of behavioral regulation. As such, the internalization occurs when the person satisfied his/her three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness). In the theory, *autonomy* refers to the desire to experience self-determination and psychological freedom (Deci & Ryan, 1985). *Competence* refers to the desire to demonstrate and improve one's capabilities (Deci, 1975). Lastly, *relatedness* refers to the desire to be valued, respected, and desired by significant others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Hence, the theory posits that when these three psychological needs are fulfilled, human growth and development would occur (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Further, Ryan and Deci (2000, 2017) distinguished the types of behavior regulation using a continuum of the qualities of self-determined motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Accordingly, human behaviors are regulated by the degree of self-determination (i.e., autonomous vs controlled). The highest quality of self-determined behaviors is regulated by internal experiences such as enjoyment and interest, which is called *intrinsic regulation*. Intrinsic regulation refers to participating in certain behaviors for enjoyment or interests and many studies have demonstrated that the relations of intrinsic regulation with the important outcomes for youth athlete development including sport continuation and well-being (e.g., Balish, McLaren, Rainham, & Blanchard, 2014; Sarrazin, Vallerand, Guillet, Pelletier, & Cury, 2002). Internalization occurs when basic psychological needs are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Intrinsic regulation leads to personal growth and development (e.g., Rottensteiner et al., 2015). Consequently, positive youth athlete development should be predicted by the level of intrinsic regulation and subsequently enhanced by BPNS (Behzadnia, Adachi, Deci, & Mohammadzadeh, 2018; Jõesaar et al., 2011).

Hedonic and eudaimonic motives

Motives demonstrate why you do what you do as motives are more broadly defined than reasons for the behaviors in English dictionary (Cambridge University, 2001). Thus, such a way of living is an essential indicator of human behaviors. Hedonic and eudaimonic motives are the personal orientations towards behaviors in specific activities (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Specifically, *hedonic motives* refer to the orientation that seeks hedonic experience (e.g., pleasure, fun, comfort) while *eudaimonic motives* are the orientation that seeks eudaimonic experience (e.g., development, excellence, meaning). Thus, a hedonic-oriented athlete often seeks more enjoyment, pleasure, and ease in their sport participation while an eudaimonic-oriented athlete frequently seeks personal growth and development in their sport participation (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Therefore, these motives can be important personal factors to predict future youth athlete development (Huta & Ryan, 2010). In fact, previous research demonstrated that the two types of personal orientations, originated from hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives, were uniquely associated with outcome variables including sport continuation, well-being, goal progress/performance (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Kinoshita, MacIntosh, & Sato, 2020; Kryza-Lacombe, Tanzini, & O'Neill, 2019; Saunders, Sweet, & Huta, 2018). Furthermore, the combination of the motives has shown the unique relationships with outcome variables. For, example, Huta and Ryan (2010) presented that the individuals with high eudaimonic and low hedonic motives significantly showed the experience of higher negative affect and lower positive affect and vitality compared to the

individuals with high hedonic and high eudaimonic motives. However, no study to date has investigated the impact of the hedonic and eudaimonic motives on the associations between BPNS and important elements for youth athlete development such as intrinsic regulation.

Moderating roles of hedonic and eudaimonic motives

Although many studies have demonstrated the causal relationship between BPNS and intrinsic regulation, research has also denoted that the relationship is influenced by the personal motivational orientation (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2011). This hypothesis came from one of the mini-theories in the SDT, which is called the Causal Orientation Theory (COT). The COT assumes that there are individual differences in how personal motivational orientation affects people's specific motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to the COT, there are individual differences in a personal tendency to perceive their behaviors as self-determined or non-self-determined: autonomy or controlled orientation (Deci, Ryan, 1985). For example, people with high autonomy orientation predicted greater experiences of BPNS (Baard et al., 2004). Furthermore, the person with high autonomy orientation maintained their intrinsic regulation in the situation where they were offered external rewards. In contrast, the person with high controlled orientation decreased their intrinsic regulation following the external rewards (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2011). Thus, these results suggest that the personal motivational orientation might be a moderating factor for the process of improvement in the quality of behavioral regulation that affected by the BPNS.

Researchers regarding other personal motivational orientation (i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic motives) have argued that high levels of both hedonic and eudaimonic motives were related to greater experience of well-being (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Seligman, 2002). However, in terms of the performance, other researchers presented that the group with high hedonic and eudaimonic motives and the group with high eudaimonic and low hedonic motives equivalently predicted the GPA in the university student samples (Kryza-Lacombe, Tanzini, & O'Neill, 2019). The study also showed that there were no significant differences in the scores regarding ill-being between the group with high in both hedonic and eudaimonic motives and the group with high eudaimonic and low hedonic motives (Kryza-Lacombe et al., 2019). However, as a previous study showed that hedonic motives itself did not predict BPNS (Saunders et al., 2018), these results suggest not only the unique relationships of hedonic and eudaimonic motives with the outcome variables, but also the combination of the motives (e.g., high in hedonic and low in eudaimonic motives) would uniquely predict outcome variables. Yet, the previous studies used a median split method to create artificial categorical variables for grouping the participants depending on the degree of each motive (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Kryza-Lacombe et al., 2019), which might lack the important conceptual and statistical considerations of the unique effects of hedonic and eudaimonic motives.

Although the median split method has been widely used to categorize the participants in the past studies, there are some significant limitations (DeCoster, Gallucci, & Iselin, 2011). For example, scholars have criticized that the analysis of variance (ANOVA) should not be used for the artificially categorized personality-related variables (Humphreys, 1978; Humphreys, & Fleishman, 1974). These researchers argued that the use of ANOVA for the median split variable would represent non-realistic results and thus, not allow researchers to interpret the results in real word circumstances. Further, the median split method significantly decreases the correlation between the normally distributed continuous variables (Peters, & Van Voorhis, 1940). A methodological scholar also concluded that the categorized method significantly reduces the statistical power and the accuracy of the estimation (Cohen, 1983). Therefore, the median split method should not be used especially for the personality-related continuous variables such as hedonic and eudaimonic motives. Therefore, we conducted the currently study by simultaneously including both hedonic and eudaimonic motives in the model, which allows us to keep the unique effects of both motives on the associations of interest and the statistical power the moderators on the relationship between BPNS and intrinsic regulation as represented in Figure 1.

The concept of hedonic motives should be more related to the causal relationship between BPNS and intrinsic regulation than eudaimonic motives because the hedonic motives seek the inner psychological experience in terms of pleasure or fun, which is similar to the concept of intrinsic regulation. Previous studies indeed showed that the combination of low hedonic motives and high eudaimonic motives was related to lower positive affect and vitality (e.g., Huta & Ryan, 2010). Therefore, more specifically, we hypothesized that the BPNS would be more positively related to intrinsic regulation for the youths with higher hedonic motives regardless of the level of eudaimonic motives. In contrast, the combination of low hedonic and high eudaimonic motives should be negatively related to the process of improvement of internalization (BPNS → intrinsic regulation).

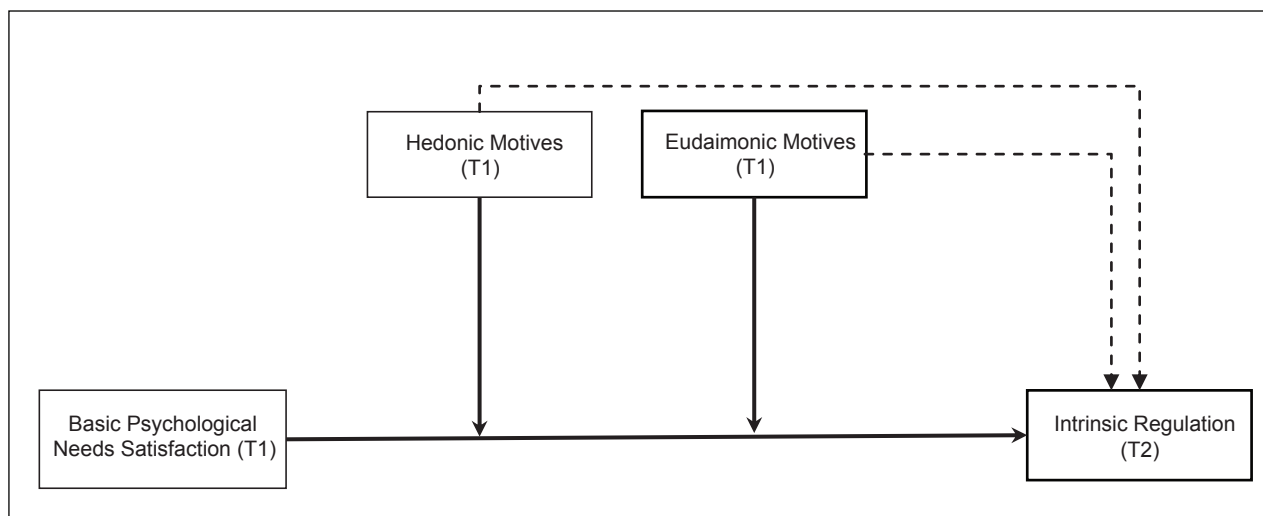


Figure 1. A conceptual diagram of moderating effects

Methods

Participants and procedures

Youth sport participants (aged 13–18) in Japan were recruited by the assistance of several youth sport clubs. The authors directly contacted the organizations or coaches by an email and phone to obtain the confirmation to conduct the project for the recruitment of the participants. We did not require any specific criteria for the recruitment of the participants except their age and sport participation. Three hundred and sixty four youth sport participants answered an online survey at time 1, while 159 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 15.67$; $SD = 1.85$; 58 female, 96 male, 5 prefer not to answer) completed an online survey at time 1 and 2 (The response rate of the second time was 43.7%). The second data collection was conducted for the same participants three months after the first data collection. Participants answered the questionnaires regarding personal motives (i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic motives), and basic psychological need satisfaction in Time 1, and intrinsic regulation was measured in Time 2. Hence, we only used the 159 participants who completed the survey for two times for the data analysis. Participants were from a wide range of sports (e.g., basketball, baseball, soccer, rugby). Participants listed themselves as either recreational (25.1%), regional (37.7%), provincial (13.2%), national (18.9%), or international (5.0%) level athletes, who weekly practice 18.33 ($SD = 9.50$) hours on average. All participants completed an online survey operated by Qualtrics. The survey was translated into Japanese using the back-translation method by the first author and the third author who are both familiar with the concept and the questionnaires. The participants were provided a consent form outlining the voluntary nature of participation and their rights to withdraw from the study. The study protocol had been approved by the ethics board at the first author's university.

Measurements

The Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (HEMA; Huta & Ryan, 2010) was used to measure the degree of both hedonic and eudaimonic motives in sport domain. The example of the hedonic motive item was “Seeking pleasure in your sport?” and the eudaimonic motives item was “Seeking to develop a skill, learn, or gain insight into something in your sport?” The scale is a 10-item scale using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The questionnaire assesses both hedonic and eudaimonic motives (five items for each). However, we removed two items of the hedonic motives subscales (i.e., “seeking relaxation”, “seeking to take it easy?”) because the results of a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrated poor loadings on those items (less than .30, Hoyle, 2000). The reliabilities for hedonic and eudaimonic motives were .80 and .83, respectively.

To assess the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction (BPNS), we used a 12-item version of Basic Need Satisfaction Scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The questionnaire measures three subscales: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. An example item is “I feel free to decide what is best for me. The participants were asked to respond by a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The three subscales can be combined to

create a general index of BPNS. This procedure is also line with past studies that the measurement has been applied to youth sport contexts with adequate reliabilities (Verner-Filion & Vallerand, 2018). The internal consistency for the present study was .88.

Intrinsic regulation was assessed using the Behavioral Regulation in Sport Questionnaire (BRSQ; Lonsdale, Hodge, & Rose, 2008). Participants rated how well the statements fit with their reasons for their sport participations. Following the stem “I participate in my main sport...” participants answered four items of intrinsic regulation (e.g., because it is fun). Participants were asked to rate their agreement with four questionnaire items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency of the scale was .97.

Data analyses

Data analyses were executed by using IBM SPSS 26.0. A moderation analyses was conducted to examine whether hedonic and eudaimonic motives would moderate the relationship between BPNS and intrinsic regulation. To conduct the moderation analyses, the PROCESS macro model 2 was employed based on 5000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2017; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). First, the unique impacts of each moderating factor should be remained although both motives should be simultaneously analyzed, being consistent with the past studies (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Kryza-Lacombe; Seligman, 2002). Second, although the analyses of previous studies (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Kryza-Lacombe, 2019) tried to retain the unique effects of hedonic and eudaimonic on the variables of interest by using the median split method, the categorized method was strongly criticized (e.g., Cohen, 1983). The Process macro model 2 allows us to retain the unique characteristics of each motive while simultaneously analyzing the data and achieving statistical power thus providing more accurate estimations of path coefficients (Hayes, 2017).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

		Mean	SD	1	2	3
1	BPNS	4.88	0.95			
2	Hedonic motives	5.94	1.08	.19*		
3	Eudaimonic motives	5.80	1.01	.36**	.73**	
4	Intrinsic Regulation	6.15	1.16	.38**	.14	.29**

Note. BPNS = Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction, * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Results

A missing data analysis found only 0.3% of the data missing and thus, expectation-maximization was performed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1.

We tested the moderating effects of hedonic and eudaimonic motives on the relationship between BPNS and intrinsic regulation using process macro model 2 (Hayes, 2017). We first tested the model with BPNS, hedonic motives, and eudaimonic motives to predict intrinsic regulation ($R^2 = .29$; $F(5, 153) = 12.57$; $p < .001$). The results showed that the main effect of BPNS was significant ($B = .32$, $t = 3.58$, $p < .001$), whereas that of hedonic ($B = -.002$, $t = -.02$, $p = .99$) and eudaimonic motives were not significant ($B = .16$, $t = 1.20$, $p = .23$). More importantly, these main effects were qualified by a set of two-way interactions between BPNS and motives (BPNS \times hedonic: $B = .59$, $t = 4.98$, $p < .001$; BPNS \times eudaimonic: $B = -.41$, $t = -3.69$, $p < .001$), which resulted in significant increase of 11.5% and 6.3% in explained variance, respectively (hedonic \times BPNS: $\Delta R^2 = .115$, $\Delta F(1,153) = 12.18$ $p < .001$; eudaimonic \times BPNS: $\Delta R^2 = .063$, $\Delta F(1,153) = 1.05$ $p < .001$). Hence, the slope of the association between BPNS and intrinsic motivation significantly differed depending on the degree of hedonic and eudaimonic motives.

Although the three-way interaction (hedonic \times eudaimonic \times BPNS) was non-significant ($B = -.04$, $t = -.64$, $p = .52$), we conducted each moderating effect. First, we expected the significance level of the three-way interaction should be balanced because the moderating effects of both motives on the relationships were almost opposite. Second, while the detection of moderating effects requires a higher statistical power (Shieh, 2009), our sample size was relatively small. Although the examination of the three-way interaction was not found to be significant, we then conducted simple slope analyses to further understand the interactions between BPNS and hedonic/eudaimonic motives. Specifically, we examined the effect of BPNS on intrinsic regulation for the individuals with low ($-1SD$),

moderate (mean), and high (+1SD) levels of hedonic and eudaimonic motives. The results demonstrated that for the youths with a low level of hedonic motives, BPNS was significantly but negatively related to intrinsic regulation when eudaimonic motives were at a high level ($B = -.79, t = -3.07, p < .01$) or a moderate level ($B = -.59, t = -2.75, p < .01$) or, but not significant at a low level of eudaimonic motives ($B = .06, t = .40, p = .69$). For the young athletes with a medium level of hedonic motives, BPNS was not significantly related to intrinsic motivation at a high ($B = .20, t = 1.68, p = .09$), but significant at a moderate level ($B = .39, t = .413, p < .001$) and at a low level of eudaimonic motives ($B = 1.05, t = .572, p < .001$). Lastly, for the youth athletes with a high level of hedonic motives, the relationships between BPNS and intrinsic motives were significant at a high ($B = .59, t = 4.81, p < .001$), a medium ($B = .79, t = .620, p < .001$), and a low level of eudaimonic motives ($B = 1.44, t = 5.89, p < .001$). The slopes of the associations for each value of hedonic and eudaimonic motives were represented in Figure 2.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the moderating effect of personal motives (i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic motives) on the relationship between BPNS and intrinsic regulation. The present results found that the relation between BPNS and intrinsic regulation was moderated by both hedonic and eudaimonic motives as is consistent with the study hypotheses. More specifically, the results demonstrated that the lower participants eudaimonic motives were, the more positive relationships between BPNS and intrinsic regulation particularly when hedonic motives were at moderate or high level. In other words, higher hedonic motives were associated with more positive internalization process (BPNS → intrinsic regulation), regardless of the level of eudaimonic motives. Moreover, the findings showed that the combination of low hedonic motives and higher eudaimonic motives was negatively influential on the process of internalization (BPNS → intrinsic regulation). These results enrich the body of literature regarding youth athletes' motivation.

BPNS was positively related to intrinsic regulation three months later, being consistent with past studies as we hypothesized (Behzadnia et al., 2018; Jöesaar et al., 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2002). Although both hedonic and eudaimonic motives did not significantly predict intrinsic regulation, the analyses of moderating effects showed that hedonic motives were positively, but eudaimonic motives were negatively associated with the process of internalization generated from BPNS. More specifically, for the youths with low hedonic motives, BPNS was negatively associated with intrinsic regulation when their eudaimonic motives were at high and moderate. The results were consistent with a previous study showed that the group with high eudaimonic and low hedonic motives significantly experienced more negative affect and less positive affect and vitality (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Thus, although higher eudaimonic motives itself may assist people to experience higher performance or achievement, which is not a psychological experience, the combination of high eudaimonic and low hedonic motives would not lead youths to more positive psychological experience (Kinoshita et al., 2020; Kryza-Lacombe et al., 2019). Consequently, high eudaimonic motives without a high level of hedonic motives is not appropriate to facilitate the quality of behavioral regulation. It may be because the individuals with high eudaimonic motives and low hedonic motives would be more achievement orientation, which results in higher achievements (Kryza-Lacombe et al., 2019), but low positive psychological experience (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Furthermore, for the young athletes with moderate or high levels of hedonic motives, lower eudaimonic motives were shown, the more positive relationships between BPNS and intrinsic regulation were found. The results were not consistent with the previous assumption, which asserts that high in both hedonic and eudaimonic motives should be associated with more desirable outcomes including well-being (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Seligman, 2002). This results also suggest that higher eudaimonic motive might be not appropriate for the process of internalization.

However, interestingly, the results of simple slopes (Figure. 2) suggest that high eudaimonic motives were more important for the acquisition of higher intrinsic regulation when the youths felt a low level of BPNS. The results were found because it may be imperative for the youth athletes with less feeling of BPNS to first pursue growth or meaning in their sport participation rather than pursuing enjoyment or pleasure. Since the condition where the athletes lack the feeling of BPNS is a difficult situation, the athletes in the condition may believe that they first want to improve their abilities or obtain meanings in their sport participation (i.e., eudaimonic motives) rather than purely pursuing enjoyment (i.e., hedonic motives). The mechanism is similar to the process of internalization as many of the behaviors are first regulated by external reasons (e.g., making a friend for sport participation), in turn, the behaviors would be internalized by satisfying their psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Thus, eudaimonic motives would be more important for the youths with a low level of BPNS.

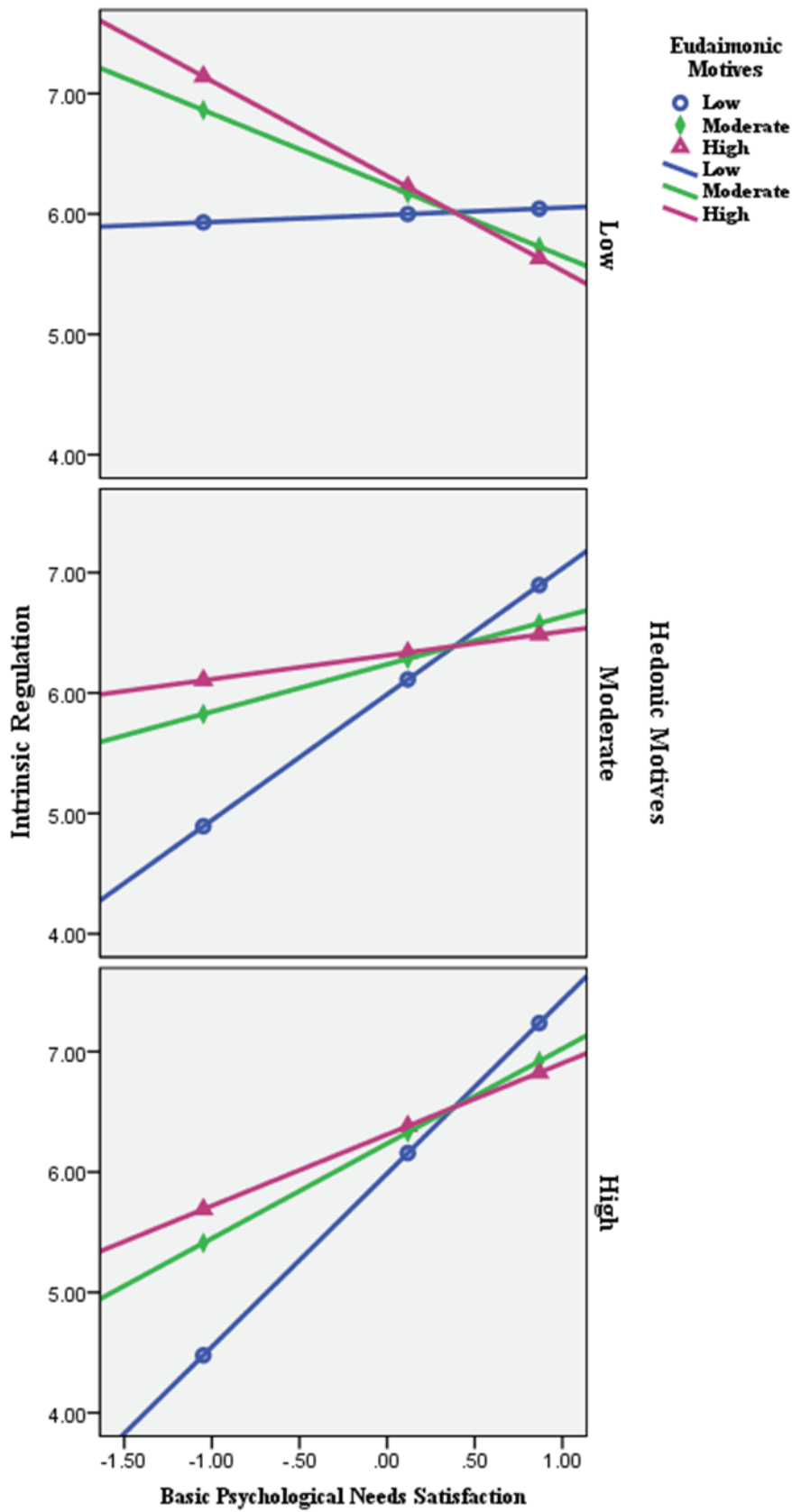


Figure 2. The results of simple slope analyses

Implications

Several implications arise from this study. First, hedonic motives are important for youth to improve their internalization for sport participation. This may counter the belief from many sport coaches in Japan that contend enjoyment is not as important as winning in competitive sports (Allen, 2019; Story, 2018). This is a very important message for youth sport developers including coaches and parents as youth sport development in Japan is not facilitated by healthy ways. According to one of the Japanese MLB players, Yoshitomo Tsutsugo, the number of young baseball population is decreasing six to 10 times faster than the decline in Japanese birth rate. Moreover, he indicated that it is due to the excessive training and injuries in the youth sport populations (Allen, 2019). He also claimed that the problem is players' winning orientations and the coaches' controlling interpersonal style at even in the youth category although the present study did not assess the winning orientation and interpersonal styles of coaches or significant others. Such a pressuring way of coaching (e.g., corporal punishment) in Japan is very common and the abuse of power caused a death of a 17-years-old high school basketball player by suicide in Japan, which happened only 8 years ago (Story, 2018). To prevent further tragic events from occurring, sport program developers should strongly recommend the adults surrounding youth sport participants to educate the youth on the importance of nurturing hedonic motives rather than winning orientation in their sport participation. Future research is needed to investigate the relationships.

Furthermore, although the results showed that the importance of eudaimonic motives of the youths with a low level of hedonic motives, the combination of high eudaimonic motives and low hedonic motives would be cause of less feeling of positive psychological experience (Huta & Ryan, 2010). As such, educating only eudaimonic perspectives for youths could be harmful to facilitate their positive psychological experiences. Hence, the eudaimonic perspective should be educated with the importance of hedonic motives in sport participation. BPNS is strongly affected by social environmental factors such as parents and coaches (Behzadnia et al., 2018; Ryan, & Deci, 2000, 2017). However, social factors were not necessarily controllable for youth athletes. As the findings showed that eudaimonic motives were more important for the youths with low BPNS, sport program developers or sport psychological practitioners can introduce the youths some practices to improve eudaimonic motives. While more research is needed in terms of how to enhance a person's eudaimonic motives, eudaimonism-focused interventions based on well-being therapy, framed by Ryff's (1989) multidimensional model of psychological well-being, including self-observation, structured diaries, and self-discovery strategies on identity exploration have shown important impacts on a person's experiences (e.g., Ruini, Ottolini et al., 2009).

Limitation and conclusion

We only used self-report measurements. Although this approach has some advantages, it does not provide objective measurements, which can be a cause of bias. Future studies can use more objective variables such as hormone (e.g., dopamine, serotonin, endorphin, or oxytocin) as a biological marker of psychological variables (Fredrickson, 2018).

Recent SDT-related research claims that the feeling of BPN satisfaction does not necessarily coexist with low levels of the BPN frustration (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Thus, it is important to distinguish BPN satisfaction from BPN frustration (Costa, Ntoumanis, & Bartholomew, 2015), which allows us a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the SDT-related variables and outcomes. Consequently, future studies should include both BPN satisfaction and frustration to more comprehensively understand the motivational mechanism underlying youth sport participation and development.

Our findings revealed that the higher in hedonic motives were shown, the more positive relationships between BPNS and intrinsic regulation was detected regardless of the level of eudaimonic motives. Moreover, the findings represented that the combination of a low level of hedonic motives and higher eudaimonic motives negatively affected the process of internalization (BPNS → intrinsic regulation). The results indicated that the important motivation perspectives for development of youth sport program.

Ethics approval and informed consent

Ethical approval for this study was obtained via the university ethics board (H-01-19-1444).

Competing interests

There are no competing interests from any of the authors in conducting this research.

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Standing on the ice: experiences of women national ice hockey players in Turkey

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

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine within the framework of symbolic interaction theory and field theory how women national ice hockey players understand ice hockey through their experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used to understand the experiences of 21 ice hockey players from the Turkish women's national team, and themes were developed from the data using the thematic analysis methods. A total of three main themes and two sub-themes were created after the analysis. In this context, three main themes related to the theoretical framework were established: "Symbolic Meanings: A Strong Ice Hockey Player," "Ice Hockey As a Life Space," and "A Hard Fight On the Ice." In addition, under the main theme of "Ice Hockey As a Life Space" are two sub-themes: "World of Emotions" and "Constraints." Ice hockey is perceived by women players as a living space that expresses a firm stance towards life. Despite the presence of traces of the concept of gender, ice hockey is not seen as a fully gendered area by Turkish players. In general, women players reported the lack of financial and social support as limiting factors for participation in ice hockey, while moral support and high motivation were supporting factors.

Keywords: Gender, field theory, ice hockey, symbolic interaction theory, women

Introduction

Nowadays, the meaning of sports and physical activity for the individual goes quite deep. People favor engaging in these activities for the purpose of being healthy, strong, and happy, steering away from the stress of daily life by being physically active (Koçak, 2016; Gürbüz & Henderson, 2014). Participation in sports and physical activity is seen as a means of empowerment, affecting women's bodies and identities. Power and empowerment were often the main theme in interviews with women who interpreted their sports and physical activity experiences (Blinde, Taub & Han, 1993; Liechty, Willfong & Sveinson, 2016; Lim & Dixon, 2017). To have power is to have control of the self, to be proud of one's physical accomplishments, and to possess a body that can tackle challenges. In contrast to power is empowerment. Although empowerment is often associated with developing women's position in society by improving their economic position and changing their working conditions or relationships, sports and physical activity can also initiate this process by affecting their identity (Deem & Gilroy, 1998). Raisborough and Bhatti

(2007, p. 463) defined empowerment as “the power of women to create new opportunities and identities that are not spontaneously formed or critically specified by traditional gender norms.” Empowerment encapsulates concepts such as independence, freedom, confronting gender roles, self-esteem, self-determination, acquisition of skills, and social benefits (Brace-Govan, 2004; Yarnal, Hutchinson & Chow, 2006).

Sports can be instrumental in improving personal power and control; people often feel more powerful participating in sports than they do other activities (Carter-Francique, Dortch & Carter-Phiri, 2017). Hence, the fact that ice hockey requires a lot of strength and endurance has also caused women to face some obstacles in the course of history, when social perspectives are considered (Theberge, 1997). Yet, the concepts of strength and endurance contained within ice hockey are thought to have contributed to women’s empowerment. When evaluated in the context of gender, we observe that concepts such as strength and endurance are identified with masculinity from the past to the present (Dunning, 1999; Adams & Leavitt, 2018). The question of whether these perspectives exist in sports and leisure activities is an object of curiosity (Theberge, 1995; Gilenstam, Karp & Henriksson-Larsén, 2008; Weaving & Roberts, 2012). In the literature, there are various studies on the performance and sports injuries of women ice hockey players (Bracko, 2001; Rundell et al., 2004; Zupon et al., 2018). However, studies with sociological and psychological evaluations are relatively rare (Theberge, 1997; Gilenstam, Karp & Henriksson-Larsén, 2008; Adams & Leavitt, 2018).

When the status of ice hockey in Turkey is examined, its development, especially in the last ten years, is remarkable. The commitment and interest of women ice hockey players in their sport is particularly intriguing. Although it has only recently been introduced to the culture, women’s ice hockey in Turkey cannot be said to have improved or progressed much due to a lack of support and general interest (Paslı, 2002). According to the 2019 data of the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports, there are 2,346 licensed athletes and 308 active women athletes in ice hockey (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019). According to the 2019 world ranking data, Turkey’s women’s ice hockey national team ranked 27th among 38 countries (International Ice Hockey Federation, 2019).

Theoretical framework

This study is planned within the framework of Blumer’s (1986) theory of symbolic interactionism (Prus, 1996). It investigates the importance of the individual in the group, her interaction with her teammates, and how she perceives and interprets ice hockey. In addition, Lewin’s (1939) field theory, which sees the living space as the reason for the formation of psychological activities that enable athletes to interpret their experiences, constitutes the theoretical background of the study. In symbolic interactionism, the object is formed by the symbolic interaction of group members with each other. The meanings of these objects are determined, maintained, or changed by group members. People act according to the meanings that objects express for themselves (Gurbuz & Henderson, 2013). Therefore, in order to understand behaviors, it is necessary to first explain what an object means for the individual (Blumer, 1986). In this study, the object is ice hockey. The goal of the study is to comprehend the object’s meaning for athletes and understand how it leads them to action.

According to symbolic interactionism, the fact that the self is a social object leads to the formation of identity. According to Hewitt and Shulman (2010), individuals develop positional, social, and individual identities. When we consider a defense player in ice hockey, the fact that she is a linebacker in the game indicates her positional identity, while her acceptance as an athlete or ice hockey player in general creates her social identity. Individual identity is a characteristic feature during the socialization process because everyone’s individual characteristics are different and everyone defines themselves in different ways (Hewitt & Shulman, 2010).

In this study, Lewin’s (1951) field theory is used as a second theory in order to understand more comprehensively how women ice hockey players perceive their ice hockey experiences. According to field theory, psychological field has a direct effect on the behavior of a particular group or individual. The formation of the life space occurs by establishing the relationship between the life space and elements such as the psychological state and psychological power (Burnes & Cooke, 2013). For example, Christensen and Sørensen (2009) determined in their study that while young footballers were struggling to find equilibrium in their life space in line with the expectations of educational institutions and football clubs, they experienced a conflict between these forces. On the other hand, Weaving and Roberts (2012) studied the “body check” ban imposed on women in ice hockey and concluded that this ban continues to reinforce traditional gender restrictions.

In a study examining how women athletes who play ice hockey describe their status in sports, Gilenstam, Karp, and Henriksson-Larsén (2008) found that the athletes have traditional perspectives in common. In the study, it was concluded that while the participants pointed to the existence of structural and economic inequalities between male and women athletes, they were satisfied with their situation. On the other hand, when examined individually,

it was determined that the athletes saw themselves differently from other women. In her study on the structure of women's ice hockey, Theberge (1997) concluded that women ice hockey players created a "noteworthy" version of ice hockey, an alternative to men's hockey. In another one of her studies, Theberge (1995) found that the "togetherness" present in a women's ice hockey team was based on the commitment to the sport of ice hockey itself. The common focal point of the women male athletes from different social strata has been ice hockey. In general, studies show that participation in sports such as hockey, skiing, and football (Migliaccio & Berg, 2007; Hämäläinen, 2014; Burke, 2019) has the potential to facilitate women's empowerment (Theberge, 2003).

In this study, participants' experiences with ice hockey were evaluated with Blumer's (1986) symbolic interactionism theory and Lewin's (1939) field theory frameworks. In this context, the validity of the assumption in the relevant literature that ice hockey is a gendered area was also questioned. The aim of this study is to examine how members of the women's national ice hockey team in Turkey understand ice hockey through their experiences within the framework of symbolic interaction theory and field theory.

Methods

Research model

Qualitative methodology is an appropriate method when little is known about a topic or when researchers are investigating a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Since very little is known about the subject, the study was carried out by examining the experiences of individuals in depth in the phenomenological model and interpretative paradigm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Additionally, a phenomenological approach was the best fit for the research question "How do women ice hockey players in Turkey understand and experience ice hockey?"

Participants

The criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in the selection of the study group (Patton, 2001). To meet the criteria for the study group, participants were required to be women athletes aged 18 or older who played ice hockey for at least five years. A total of 21 women athletes aged between 18 and 31 years with sports experience between 5 and 17 years participated in the study voluntarily. Individual interviews continued until data saturation was reached. The personal and demographic information of the study group is shown in Table 1.

In the study, individual interviews were conducted using the semi-structured interview technique (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Before the interview questions were prepared, some relevant studies were examined pertinent to the purpose of the research (Theberge, 1997; Gilenstam, Karp & Henriksson-Larsén, 2008; Adams & Leavitt, 2018). The first part of the semi-structured interview form includes questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, such as years of sports experience, age, educational background and parents' professions. The second part of the semi-structured interview contained questions about how the participants perceive ice hockey, the factors that motivate them to continue, and constraining factors. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and by ensuring their voluntary participation in the study their consent was obtained. Individual interviews lasted two weeks and were carried out in the Turkish Olympic Preparation Center and Umitkoy Sports Complex Ice Rink, both located in Ankara. Each interview lasted an average of 25 minutes.

Analysis

The thematic analysis method was used for analysis of the data. The thematic analysis set forth by Braun and Clarke (2006) is actualized in six stages. These are: familiarizing the researcher with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. To control the codes, sub-themes and main themes that are formed as a result of thematic analysis, field notes were utilized. Intercoder reliability, developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), was used in reliability analysis to ensure the reliability of the data obtained. For intercoder reliability, $(\text{reliability} = [\text{consensus}/\text{consensus} + \text{disagreement}] \times 100)$ formula was engaged. According to this formula, a reliability score above 80% is an indication of reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data for reliability analysis were presented to two experts in the field of Sports Management from the Faculty of Sport Sciences of Ankara University, and 93% agreement was reached. In the study, how the data collection process works is expressed in detail. The achievement of internal validity was attempted through methods such as triangulation, researcher stance, and expert review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Interviews with each participant were conducted meticulously, ethical sensitivity was maintained, and the attainment of honest

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Name	Age	Years of sports experience	Education	City	Mother's occupation	Father's occupation	Economic status
Duru	18	13	Undergrad	Ankara	Cosmetician	Hairdresser	Medium
Ozge	23	11	Undergrad	Ankara	Self-Employed	Self-Employed	Medium
Bade	31	11	PhD	Istanbul	Civil Engineer	Civil Engineer	High
Deniz	26	11	Postgraduate	Istanbul	Officer	Soldier	Medium
Leyla	23	6	Undergrad	Ankara	Housewife	Shipper	Medium
Oyku	20	10	Undergrad	Ankara	Cosmetician	Hairdresser	Medium
Ebru	28	14	Postgraduate	Ankara	General Coordinator	-	High
Gozde	18	5	Undergrad	Erzurum	Housewife	Retired	High
Zeynep	18	5	Undergrad	Erzurum	Housewife	Officer	High
Yagmur	23	12	Undergrad	Ankara	Housewife	Retired	Medium
Bahar	22	10	Undergrad	Ankara	Teacher	Self-Employed	Medium
Irmak	23	17	Graduate	Istanbul	Nurse	Teacher	Medium
Asya	20	8	Undergrad	Erzurum	Housewife	Officer	Medium
Hazal	20	14	Undergrad	Ankara	Housewife	Self-Employed	High
Derya	18	5	Undergrad	Ankara	Teacher	Prosecuter	Medium
Ada	21	14	Undergrad	Erzurum	Housewife	Contractor	Medium
Serenay	23	6	Graduate	Kocaeli	Housewife	Craftsman	Medium
Bilge	19	6	Undergrad	Istanbul	Banker	Banker	High
Seyma	19	5	Undergrad	Erzurum	Housewife	Officer	Medium
Gokce	25	10	Graduate	Ankara	Accountant	Sales Marketing	Medium
Mina	22	5	Undergrad	Kocaeli	Housewife	Driver	Medium

answers was the goal (Lincoln, 1995). On the other hand, in the expert review, the quality and consistency of the data was checked by meetings conducted regularly. External validity is provided through the selection of a non-random purposeful sample.

Results

In the study, women ice hockey players presented similar views on how they understand ice hockey, their intention to continue participating in the sport, and the obstacles they faced. The analyses resulted in three main themes related to the theoretical framework. In this context, the first theme was “Symbolic Meanings: A Strong Ice Hockey Player,” the second theme was “Ice Hockey as a Life Space,” and the third theme was “A Hard Fight on the Ice.”

Symbolic meanings: a strong ice hockey player

During the individual interviews, participants used the phrase “standing solid on the ice” many times. For the participants, being a good ice hockey player lies in having a solid stance on the ice. A participant named Seyma, age 19, described a successful ice hockey player as follows:

“A person who can stand firmly on the ice, who never gives up, continues with determination and ambition until the last second of the game... When you look into the eyes of a hockey player, you should be scared.”

The participants shared their views that they discovered their strength through ice hockey and thus boosted their self-confidence. In addition, participants shared the opinion that an ice hockey player should be determined.

They described the persistence of not giving up until the last second in the ice rink and the determination required to develop themselves physically and mentally outside of the rink. In fact, it is possible to evaluate sports ethics as fundamental to how the participants perceived ice hockey. Indicating that this is a must for the relationships maintained both during and after the game, Ebru, age 28, pointed out the sensitivity of the subject:

“First of all, I believe that you need to be a good athlete to be a good ice hockey player. The most important part of being a good athlete is, above everything else, not being selfish, being disciplined, and playing within the rules of fair play. We play games, and since this community is not as big as football, we have to face our friends when the game is over. For example, if there was a goal and the referee didn't see it, I would say ‘It was in; don't cheat my friends of their rights.’”

One of the codes that emphasizes the interaction between women ice hockey players is team spirit. The participants strongly believe in the power of team spirit. Leyla, age 23, defined the effect of team spirit as a “miracle,” elaborating that “When we look at the features that make ice hockey one of the most difficult sports in the world, we see talent, speed, power, endurance, and control. And hence, in order to engage in all these together appropriately, the necessity of game intelligence comes to the fore.” The participants stated that the game intelligence expected to be present in an ice hockey player was seriously effective. In this regard, Gokce, age 25, stated the following:

“There is something called ‘hockey sense,’ which means reading how a game develops on the ice. This sense can be improved in hockey players, but it can be much more advanced in some players. Actually, it is known where, when, what to do... This feeling is to read and understand the game, to know both where the other team and your team shall take their position.”

When considered within the framework of Blumer's (1986) theory of symbolic interactionism, participants associated ice hockey with power and ethical behavior. At the same time, they highlighted the importance of team spirit and interaction among the individuals within the group, interpreting their actions on the ice with determination and game intelligence.

Ice hockey as a life space

In the framework of Lewin's (1939) field theory, which proposes the life space as the reason for the formation of psychological activities that enable athletes to interpret their experiences, two sub-themes emerged. The first sub-theme was “World of Emotions” and the second was “Constraints.”

World of emotions

It was thought that the participants adopted the area of ice hockey as their life space. They produce emotions by making positive or negative interpretations in line with their experiences in their life spaces. The participants expressed the common opinion that the ice hockey life spaces made them feel happy. Women ice hockey players described this happiness as “eternal.” Yagmur, age 23, stated:

“I really like the tactical parts of the training the most. In those moments, I feel like I really feel eternal. I really feel so happy that my friend becomes like my other hand, I feel wonderfully happy. I'd be depressed if I stopped playing hockey. None of us can give it up.”

In addition to happiness, participants also emphasized that they were deeply attached to and passionate about their ice hockey life spaces. In fact, this was such a passion for them that although they had some challenging times, even these moments always made them more attached to their life spaces. The women ice hockey players described their passion for ice hockey as “even beyond love.” Participants who have experienced the stress relief and relaxing effect of the ice hockey life space conveyed thoughts similar to those of Bilge, age 19:

“Violence or being aggressive never comes to my mind. In fact, quite the contrary. When I was little, I had trouble controlling my nerves. Hockey has made me a much calmer person rather than making me more aggressive.”

In participants' defining ice hockey and themselves as “different,” the low recognition of ice hockey in Turkey can be observed. As ice hockey is not among one of the traditional Turkish sports and has only recently begun to gain popularity in Turkey, participants declared the common opinion of wanting to be more recognized and understood. Deniz stated that ice hockey promotes self-confidence as it is a different sport that not everyone can do. In addition, if their recognition increases, Ebru, age 28, stated that they can be seen as “stars of the ice”:

“Maybe people don’t know about the existence of such a team. After the 2011 Universiade, we actually started to be recognized and moved up. We’ve made a lot of progress in the past four years. However, many people do not know that we have reached this level. People who watch our game say, ‘When we step onto the ice, we can’t even stand straight, but you are fighting against each other there.’ So, I believe if people come to watch us, they might call us ‘stars of the ice.’”

The participants stated that in addition to increased recognition, they also want their games to be understood. They stated that they faced some challenges because they were not recognized and understood enough. However, despite all these habitual skepticisms, they see ice hockey as a life space. For them, ice hockey expresses happiness, relaxation, and the passionate attachment they felt to their friendships. In addition, by the virtue of their high self-confidence, ice hockey is seen as a highly supportive and motivating life space in psychological terms.

Constraints

The participants shared some common views on the constraints they faced in their ice hockey life spaces. The athletes reported that they faced the most constraints in terms of sports facilities. The inadequacies of facilities cause training hours to be limited. The athletes living in Erzurum, which hosted the 25th Winter Universiade in 2011 and is considered the center of winter sports, find themselves in a more advantageous position because they do not experience any difficulties with facilities and training hours. However, it seems that athletes who live in larger Turkish cities encounter various constraints in terms of facilities and training times. For example, Bade, a 31-year-old athlete living in Turkey’s most populous city, expressed this situation as follows:

“When I first started ice hockey, there was no Olympic rink in Istanbul. We’ve had Olympic rinks for the last 6-7 years. We were trying to train on the little ice rinks in the shopping malls. Now it’s still hard for me to keep training until late hours. Located in a less developed area of Istanbul, the facility is very difficult to reach. I also find it difficult to return home alone from this neighborhood because my training finishes quite late at night. Until this year, there were times when I left the training session at 2 AM or I started training at 6 in the morning.”

Participants also raised the financial constraints they faced when purchasing equipment. They brought up the problems they experience in both acquiring and affording equipment. In addition to facing these constraints, Gokce, age 25, explained the negative effects of inadequate recognition as follows:

“Ultimately ice hockey is an amateur sport in Turkey. The total number of ice hockey rinks in Turkey does not exceed 10. There is no recognition. We put a lot of effort into hockey. We give our time. Equipment is very expensive. You get out of practice at night, get up in the morning, go to school, and go to work. Since no money comes to the clubs, we have problems when going to an away game. As a result, there is no income from hockey. I mean, you can’t do it as a profession, it just stays a hobby.”

When commenting on the constraints they encountered in parallel with their experiences, participants expressed that they wanted to spend more quality time in their ice hockey life spaces. According to their statements, their life spaces motivated them at a high level, but the constraints they faced were expected to affect their motivations negatively. However, when the demographic characteristics of the participants were examined, it was seen that they were supported by their socially strong families. Accordingly, it is possible to say that they ignore the lack of financial means and support.

A Hard Fight on the Ice

Women ice hockey players commonly stated that they were against gender stereotypes. Ebru, age 28, described the discomfort she felt upon hearing the opinion that sports and ice hockey are gendered fields as follows:

“Sports should not be gendered. In my opinion, there is no gender in sports. For example, the reporters came and asked me, ‘Why ice hockey, ice hockey is a masculine sport.’ I said ‘Why do you gender sports so much?’ When confronted with this reaction, they understood their mistakes and canceled the question. They no longer inquire about that. Views like ‘Why ice hockey, it is such a masculine sport?’ pisses me off. We put in the same effort as men; we are in a great place now. We don’t actually think of anything like that until someone asks.”

Players reacted negatively to those who use the term “masculine sport” to describe ice hockey. In addition, they stated that they did not accept the limitations created by the concept of gender. They expressed feeling different from other women because of their awareness of their power. Irmak, age 23, expressed her opinion on this subject as follows:

“I think sport does not have the distinction of feminine or masculine. We do not have such a petite appearance compared to other women. We are aware of our strength. There is an established concept of gender in society: ‘Boys are strong, girls are not so strong.’ But because of the sport we do, many of us are really strong girls.”

Participants said that from time to time they trained with men because it was beneficial for their physical development. They stated that they did not encounter a constraint on the issue of training with men. Gokce, age 25, said the following in this regard:

“I was training with men to be able to develop more. After all, there were men who were physically better. Women players can play even much better than those men as well. I’m not saying that men play hockey better. I was training with them just because they could shoot harder compared to women of my level.”

The women players described themselves as being hard on the ice. However, they emphasized that they did not want to reflect their hardness on the ice in their daily lives. For example, Bahar, age 22, expressed that a delicate person could not survive on the ice, and she herself also liked being hard and considered it as an advantage:

“Most people who play ice hockey are not so delicate. There are shoots exploding on you, you collide with opposing players. If you’re a delicate person, you’d want to quit directly at the first training session. I really like things that are hard, therefore for myself, I consider this as an advantage.”

Although in Turkish society it is sometimes emphasized that ice hockey is a “masculine sport,” women ice hockey players do not see ice hockey as a gendered area. The participants generally described themselves as “different.” They underlined their differences by being fond of hardness and emphasizing that they were aware of their power. Women ice hockey players, who emphasize being different, regard ice hockey in Turkey as a field where the solidarity of different identities in terms of male and women athletes is present.

Discussion

When focusing on group life according to Blumer’s (1986) symbolic interactionism theory, participants of the study reflected on their commitment to ice hockey and their teams with concepts such as happiness and love. They stated that being an ice hockey player makes them different from other women because it makes them aware of their power. The statement that the feeling of togetherness in a women’s hockey team is based on the commitment to ice hockey was also seen in Theberge’s (1995) study. However, it has been revealed that the common focus of women from different social strata is ice hockey. Regarding this study, it was stated that the participants were generally from similar social strata and were supported by families with higher socio-economic status.

The “body check,” one of the most obvious examples of in-game interaction in ice hockey, is forbidden for women players. Blumer (1986) indicated that in group life, actions provide social interaction and shape human behaviors. In this regard, Weaving and Roberts (2012) stated in their study that this ban continues to reinforce traditional gender restrictions. As for this study, participants drew attention to the “body check” ban. However, it was not possible to reach a conclusive judgment as clear as Weaving and Roberts (2012) reached. The participants stated that they liked the hardness in the game and that they enjoyed the minor brawls and other apparently violent aspects of the game that occur despite the ban.

In symbolic interactionism theory, the fact that the meaning, action, or situation that emerges through social interaction may change in time has been demonstrated by Blumer (1986). Examining how ice hockey players described their sport and their status in sports, Gilenstam, Karp, and Henriksson-Larsén (2008) found that athletes shared traditional women and male views. In the study, although the participants claimed that there were structural and financial inequalities, they stressed that they were pleased to be ice hockey players. Individually, it is determined that athletes found themselves different from other women. In the results of the study, it was seen that the performance of a sport thought to be related with gender does not support the proposition that it can change the traditional gender view. In our study as well, participants considered themselves different from other women, but

did not share traditional gender roles and opposed the idea that ice hockey was a gendered field. Akcan (2011), in a study positioning mountaineering as a subculture, demonstrated that mountaineers adopt mountaineering as a lifestyle by creating sub-identities in the socialization process they entered while participating in this subculture. Similarly, ice hockey players perceive themselves differently from those who cannot be ice hockey players, exhibit ample attachment to ice hockey as a life space, and describe the way they feel about ice hockey with concepts such as happiness and love.

Adams and Leavitt (2018) attempted to reveal how resistance was shown to historically rooted gender inequalities through regional women's hockey and emphasized the need to draw attention to the growth in women's sports and their success stories. Likewise, Theberge (1997) examined physical differences in women's hockey, demonstrating that women hockey players created an alternative "noteworthy" version of men's hockey. In our study, participants did not mention the distinction between women's hockey and men's hockey. They mentioned they enjoy training alongside men. They did not accept socially established gender differences or the separation of powers. They expressed that they put in a similar amount of effort as male players, showed they could train together with them, and suggested neither hockey nor sports should be gendered.

Conclusion

Ice hockey is perceived by women players as a life space that expresses a strong stance towards life and empowerment. The opinion is shared that an ice hockey player must act with perseverance, team spirit, game intelligence, and sports ethics. When the players considered ice hockey as a life space, they mostly brought concepts of happiness, togetherness, passion, relaxation, and self-confidence to the fore. Ice hockey is regarded as being psychologically highly supportive and motivating for the participants. In general, while women players assess the moral support they receive and their motivation at a high level, they consider their lack of sufficient means and financial support as constraints. When participants commented on constraints they experienced, such as facility training hours and financial issues, they emphasized that they desired to spend more quality time in their life spaces. The participants underlined the fact that they were aware of their power and therefore they were different. However, despite visible traces of the concept of gender, the players do not see ice hockey as a gendered field in Turkey. In fact, they partially oppose this idea. By arguing that male and women players make similar efforts, they stated that they did not differ from each other. However, they did emphasize that their awareness of their power made them different from other women who could not be ice hockey players.

In future studies, it may be possible to conduct research on how players perceive sports that are considered as feminine. In their preferred fields, it can be examined whether or not men, like women, faced constraints while participating in these sports, and if they did what kinds of strategies they developed to deal with these constraints. On the subject of women ice hockey players, the scope of the study can be narrowed to focus on perceptions, constraints, or sources of motivation. The authorities can be urged to take steps to meet the financial needs of ice hockey players with regard to the results of the study. The number of facilities can be increased and training hours can be improved. With better equipped infrastructure, more success can be achieved in ice hockey. It is recommended that the authorities carry out studies in order to promote ice hockey and raise public awareness of this sport.

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The effectiveness of sport within social intervention projects: a UK case study

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

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Abstract

In the UK, successive governments have prioritised the use of sport for developmental purposes, a range of broader community matters, and as a purposeful tool to help at-risk youth. However, given the accepted wisdom underpinning the continued investment in sports projects that reflect ideas centred on youth and community development, it is not unsurprising that a number of authors (for instance, Coalter, 2007; Griffiths and Armour, 2011) question the validity and true nature of using sport in this context. This is especially so when some research indicates that it may well be the schemes, people, or ancillary benefits within projects that are the primary factor in any appreciable change in pro-social behaviours, rather than sport per se (Sandford, Armour, and Duncombe, 2008). This study used interviews with eight experienced community sport development officers, coaches, and project organisers in the south of the UK. The findings revealed that sport *and* social intervention projects could develop participants' self-esteem, resilience, and aspirations, and that sport was seen as a helpful tool to help facilitate this. However, the findings also emphasised that any meaningful changes in behaviour were also subject, and subordinate to, the importance of developing positive coach-participant relationships. The implications are discussed within the paper.

Coaching; development; inclusion; anti-social behaviour; youth sport

Why community sport in the UK matters

Despite sustained cuts to UK public services over the last ten years of austerity driven policy¹, sport has continued to receive both financial (although reduced) and political support. Much of this, in the eyes of UK governmental departments, has been predicated upon what is considered to be almost irrefutable positive evidence regarding what is considered its transformative properties. In the context of community and youth type sport this evidence does have some real traction, and much of it posits that the promotion of and participation in community sport has the potential to address a range of social policy issues and contribute to the well-being and health of individu-

¹ Since 2010, the Coalition (2010) and then Conservative governments (2015) have instituted a series of fixed government department spending budgets in an attempt to reduce the public spending deficit.

als (Collins, 2010; Coalter, 2007). These types of propositions are also supported by claims that sport can help individuals with a variety of personal, educational, and even vocational achievement goals and positive outcomes (Theokas, Danush, Hodge, & Heke, 2009). Moreover, the consensus is that broader community issues (such as low educational attainment) can, in part, be tackled through the use of sport (Huskins, 1998; Houlihan & White, 2002; Hylton & Totten, 2008).

Questions remain, however, related to the manner in which sport can facilitate developmental objectives (in both individual and community matters). For instance, Coakley (2011:306) critiques the “anecdotes and unsystematic observations that uncritically support the evangelistic promise that sport participation produces positive development among young people”. It is this viewpoint, and other unrealistic generalizations about the potential of sport to change peoples’ behaviours and lives, that underpins the rationale for this research and why sport development officers, coaches, and project organisers (SDOC&PO) were interviewed to find out whether they thought, with their field experience, that sport is effective activity for solving problems and improving behaviour for individuals.

There does exist, however, a fair amount of evidence supporting the use of sport for developmental and community matters. Much of this is explained through the use of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Cox, 1998), positive youth development (PYD) (Eccles & Gootman, 2002), and social capital (Delaney & Keaney, 2005; Hoye and Nicholson, 2008). The first, social learning theory, is used to explain how the behaviour of individuals is learnt through observing others and, in effect, imitating their behaviour (Coalter, 2007). Perhaps the key to understanding it though is the fact that it proposes that this process of learning works best in environments that give praise to valued behaviour. In this sense, if this model and process is applied to the field of sports participation, then the theory stands that it is through social reinforcement that participants in sports programmes improve their behaviour (Hoye, Nicholson, & Houlihan, 2010). This is through observing and imitating the behaviour of significant others, such as coaches and teachers (Collins & Kay, 2003). In essence then, the process of socialization, whereby we acquire our characteristics, values and norms relative to the societies and environments we live in (Bilton et al., 1981), can be seen to be facilitated through those who run sports projects.

What this means then is that those individuals who are not supported by strong family units can find (or be given) alternative sources and role models to develop both emotionally and in terms of support networks (Coalter, 2007). In this context sport, with its perceived positive pro-social elements, such as teamwork, commitment, and discipline can be seen to frame behavioural contexts and learning and, presumably, contribute to increases in self-control, self-discipline, and self-awareness (Coalter, 2005; Buelens, Theeboom, Vertonghen, & De Martelaer, 2015). If we understand this through the lens of community engagement (sport *and* social intervention) programmes then, sport can play a meaningful role in socialising people and offering positive role models (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011).

A second way that evidence for sport’s presumed effectiveness in the context of psycho-social development is explained is oftentimes through the theory of PYD. In the context of youth sport, the idea that sport has meaning beyond play itself is given credence through the wide claims that it can be used in order to effect changes through engaging and inspiring young people, and focusing on community development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 2004). The guiding principles of PYD, seeing children and young people as resources to be developed and not as problems to be managed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2015), are seen by some to be facilitated through the use of sport. This includes, but is not exhaustive to, increased cognitive competence, self-regulation, initiative, and ownership of action for young people (Coalter, 2007).

Social capital too is often used in the context of sport to explain the extent to which, like physical capital can be measured and constructed through the acquisition of material objects, ‘social wealth’ can be measured. This is through, for instance, the acquisition of friendships, networks, and helpful partnerships (Hoye & Nicholson, 2008). In this field, there is a wide range of literature that uses social capital to help explain how social networks in the context of youth and sports participation can increase in size and the range of support available. For example, Bradbury and Kay’s (2008) analysis of the *Step into Sport* programme (a national initiative that trains young sports volunteers), and Bell’s (2007) outline of the success of the Champion Coaching scheme (a national youth sport and coaching scheme which ran from 1991-2000). Additionally, many UK policy documents (see DCMS, 2000/2008; DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002; ODPM, 2004; Home Office, 2006; Cabinet Office, 2015), specifically draw on the concept of social capital.

But it is not always the case that the research explicitly suggests that it is sport itself that has helped facilitate change. Indeed, studies regularly indicate that it is some of the wider benefits of participating in programmes that have assisted and advanced such changes (Blum, 2003). The work of the Positive Futures programme² (2003/9/13),

² Positive Futures was a national social inclusion programme centrally funded by the Home Office from 1999 to 2013.

for instance, shows how similar patterns of relationship building and enhancing social cohesion are evident among different mediums such as arts and music projects for youth. Moreover, much is also made of the necessity of suitable individuals who can provide direction and structure to at-risk youth (Coakley & Pike, 2009).

Community sports coaches and the power of relationships

And so the issue then is not simply whether increased sports participation can be viewed as contributing to the personal development and awareness of young people, as well as the reduction of indices that point to what we understand as social exclusion. Rather, it is whether sport itself has some kind of transformative property, or if any success is in partnership with or a combination of other factors.

Here we can draw upon a wide range of work that points to the role and practice of community coaches as essential to programme success. Examples of this include Martinek and Hellison's (1997) work that recommended approaches to successful programmes that focused on emotional needs and developing relationships. This kind of approach is summarised through a growing body of work, such as that of Bell (2007), Bradbury and Kay (2008), Sandford, Armour, and Duncombe (2008), and Hardman, Jones and Jones (2010), who all surmise that community based sport programmes looking to promote positive development must emphasise positive relationships and the role of the coach. So given that there is continued investment in the use of sport in community projects in the UK, it stands to reason that we look to understand more about whether it really 'works'. Indeed, here it is worth noting that authors such as Coalter (2001; 2007), Bailey, Hillman, Arent and Petipas (2012), and Griffiths and Armour (2011) believe that there is insufficient evidence to fully support the claim that sport can be of use in community development and addressing wider social policy objectives. Moreover, Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet and Borbee's (2019) systematic review of sport *and* social (youth) interventions in the United States found that the quality of reviewed evidence from a 23 year period was "weak and incoherent" (p.17).

In summary then, whilst there is a range of encouraging claims about the positive relationship between sport and social behaviours, there is a continued need to avoid naive generalizations related to the transformational capacity of sport within community settings, and a further need to generate more theoretically informed and nuanced explanations by researching within the field and the practitioners themselves. This study thus positions itself by asking whether sport has, in an essentialist manner, core attributes that lend themselves well in encouraging pro-social behaviours and wider community commitment and involvement. Alongside this, the present study also queries whether it is the ancillary benefits of taking part in projects, such as contact with others and the facilitation of positive relationships, that potentially outweighs the actual use of sport. It addresses these queries in two ways: (1) By critically analysing data, gathered through asking SDOC&POs, to determine whether claims made for sport as a medium to effect changes in pro-social behaviour are with merit, and (2) by investigating whether the existing understanding of best practice in community sports projects can be added to through the recollections and advice of a number of SDOC&POs.

Methodology

Traditionally, action research is seen as a method by which researchers can focus, through using a critically reflective approach, on exactly how research can be transformed into more substantive action. Typically, action research incorporates cycles of planning, reflection, and finally modifications to existing practice, all through collaborating with practitioners in order to improve understanding and practice (Somekh, 2005). It is in this context that the author acknowledges their past experience working in adolescent care, youth work, and community sport. What this means is that this research, by way of the author's ideas, previous contact with and subsequent use of people 'in the field' known to them (including as part of a wider university approved project), and the continuing post research professional contact they have with some of the participants (through collaborative work), operates through an action research stance (Thomas, 2013).

Broadly, given the aims of the study were to determine whether claims made for sport as a medium to effect changes in pro-social behaviour are with merit, and to investigate best practice in community sports projects, an interpretive research design was adopted. This was in order to determine the perspectives, beliefs, and thoughts of the participants. By working off the assertion that asking practitioners in the field of community sport (who could yield substantive answers based on action and experience) whether sport has fundamental qualities that contribute

to identifiable developmental outcomes, the study used a purposive (Patton, 2002), theoretical (Bryman, 2002; Robson, 2002) sample consisting of SDOC&POs who were known to the researcher from the previously mentioned work in community sport type projects. In order to ensure good levels of understanding and experience could be reflected on, the main criteria for inclusion in the present study was for participants to have a minimum of three years' full-time experience of working in sport *and* social intervention settings and programmes (sport projects that also looked to embed a number of non-sport objectives).

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The interview questions were open-ended and, in total, took place over a two-month period at various sites chosen as being convenient for the interview participants themselves. The interviews followed an interview guide which had been developed to ensure that the aims of the study were followed and, where necessary, the interviewer sought to direct the conversations and elaborate on certain points. The interviews took between 30 and 90 minutes each, and were free-flowing and intended to reflect the perceptions of the interviewees themselves. The interviews were recorded verbatim (with permission from the interviewees) and the participants were assigned anonymized names. See Figure 1 below for biographies (anonymised) of the participants.

Jon: works as a football in the community project manager and at time of writing had done so for five years. Previous to this, Jon had worked at another football club in a similar capacity for three years.

Francis: has over ten years' experience working in the community sport setting and at time of writing was working as a local authority sports development officer and a part time sports coach for a local football club.

Sam: has worked for the past eight years for a local authority in a sports capacity. This has included community regeneration programmes that focus on sport as a means to engage participants.

Danny: works in a community development coaching role for a local semi-pro football club. He has been in this role for over three years, but before this worked with young offenders and used sport projects in that role.

Martin: works as a community sports coach. Whilst full-time equivalent, he works for a variety of providers such as his local authority, an outreach programme, and his local professional football club the last four years.

Dave: coaches for a local authority sports development department as part of their community engagement strategy. Alongside this, he works in adolescent care in a sports capacity.

Marc: works as a sport development officer for a local authority. He is an experienced project organiser having set up a very successful series of programmes in his area that have focused on social intervention.

Hamid: works as a community coach and runs various sports qualifications and courses for a local college.

Figure 1. Participant Biographies (Anonymised)

All transcripts were repeatedly reread to draw out recurring patterns and themes through a process of thematic analysis (Bryman, 2008; Smith, 2010). These themes were then decoded and categorised into lower order themes and then subsequently four higher order themes. These higher order themes broadly reflected the aims of the study, and at this point saturation was deemed to have occurred (with no new information occurring) and further data analysis was considered unnecessary. These four higher order themes were then directed into two sections representing distinct patterns and the following two key dimensions: 1) *criticisms and awareness of limitations of sport*; and 2) *skill transference and belief*. The next section will discuss these themes in the context of wider literature.

Findings and discussion

The findings are presented using quotes to illustrate the participants' experiences. This is in order to understand how community sport coaching and the use of sport can be seen through the actions, beliefs, and recollections of the study participants themselves. The data was categorised through four higher order themes which were placed into two key dimensions. These four higher order themes are, respectively, '*imaginative, creative, and interesting*' and '*it's the people not the project*' for the first key dimension, and '*the dregs of life*' and '*sport as the tool*' for the second key dimension.

Criticisms and awareness of limitations of sport

Imaginative, creative, and interesting...to make them come back

Several problems face those trying to promote sport participation in areas of social deprivation. Here, all the study participants indicated that one of the areas that general coaching in sport needed to prioritise in these type of programmes was the issue of creativity. This was considered a perennial problem, particularly in light of the nature and context within which the study participants operate, one where most of the time participation in their sports programmes was a choice, and not mandatory. Underpinning this problem was the way in which the SDOC&POs in this study needed to continually enhance the experiences that the participants had in terms of enjoyment, engagement, and increasing their desire to come back. Any initial motivation to attend was seen as temporary, and developing new skills, strategies, and ways of thinking for the project deliverers was considered paramount to the success of the programmes and sessions. Francis, for instance, explained how PE teachers in schools and club type sports coaches didn't have the same pressure as those in the community:

“They don't have to be creative. Whereas our coaches, whether it be a community coach or someone who makes a living from it, has to be creative, has to be imaginative, has to make it interesting...to make those people come back. So, it's a different skill-set and actually a different mind-set. And I think, one is not necessarily better than the other, it's just different and needs to be different.”

Danny elaborated upon this idea. One of his “bugbears” was people trying to impose discipline without thinking of the personal circumstances and backgrounds of the participants:

“I don't think being regimented works within community sport. It can be used, but I just think that it's too much for them. I always say that the difference between a coach and a school teacher is...a school teacher doesn't have to be imaginative.”

Sam questioned the way that some coaches operated. In essence, he advocated an approach that repeatedly reinforced a critical analysis of personal values, beliefs, assumptions and ideas:

“I just really think why do we have to have all these things that we're taught to do, why do we have to have all of these prescriptive things. Let's just...send the information this is what you need to do, maybe learn, maybe just have some fun, and bang get on with it. To me there's a lot of bureaucracy and hypocrisy around what we need to do.”

Overall then, there was a feeling that typical approaches to delivering sports coaching sessions would not necessarily be worthwhile or effective in the community setting. The SDOC&POs in the present study opined that a particular type of knowledge, one that emphasised a central tenet of creativity in order to engage the participants, was necessary in the context within which they operated. It was apparent then, that any idea of sport being ‘worthwhile’ needed to be cached within a broader sense of content and contextually specific knowledge. Larson (2006) suggests that this deeper approach to developing adaptability and creativity, and at times management and leadership skills, can be facilitated through constructing an environment that challenges participants. This parallels the way that the SDOC&POs in this study looked to motivate their participants by encouraging “engagement in challenging, task-oriented behaviour” (p.679).

What was also of note though was that all of the study participants felt that there needed to be an understanding of the nature and role of people skills within projects. They suggested that the level, and type, of knowledge needed was one that needed to be more attuned to figuring out strategies that would account for the interactions, responses, and facilitation of relationships within the projects. Of note, this was considered to be as or even more important than the use of sport itself. Jon expounded upon this idea with his statement that:

“I'm a firm believer in making sure that your coaches are the best that they can be. Which is why I spend so much time getting people thinking about things, but also getting them to work with other young people so that they get that other viewpoint, that other feel of what people were doing and what they like to do.”

It's the people not the project...

This critical appreciation of the limitations of sport in developing relationships and further advancing the claims of successful projects, is further illustrated by a discussion with Danny who recounted that some administrators or funding bodies might simplify the power of sport:

“I really think that the idea of the project is straightforward, But it’s the people within the team that will make that project successful. I can manage people, I can have a co-ordinator who can manage people, but unless they’re delivering the goods properly and making those relationships with those groups you’re not gonna get them along.”

Additionally, whilst the SDOC&POs felt that empowering those running the sports coaching sessions and projects with their choice of sport and activities was critical, it was more a case of ensuring that the people in charge of the groups were the “right match” and possessed the skills essential to get on with people. Marc identified the importance of learning transferable skills through sport, his quote being representative of all:

“Is sport itself the appropriate vehicle to try and effect changes in behaviour? It is, but I believe that it’s got to be the right kind of sport, and more importantly, the right kind of person leading it, for the right groups.”

In most cases there seemed to be a recognition that sport was helpful, yet secondary to the real interactions and managerial skills that the study participants felt they needed. Martin, from his recollections of starting as a community sport coach, had raised the importance of sport “as a large and important part of what can be done”. These observations were tempered by thoughts such as Hamid’s that “if you can work in the right direction I do feel that it is the people within a project, That’s what makes a project”. This fits neatly with the view that Dave made:

“Sport is not the answer to everything. And it never will be, same as, having a police force is 100% going to give you no crime. It just doesn’t work (like that). But people can have an impact and changes the way they live their lives...”

These views are consistent with the findings of Coalter and Taylor (2009) and Haudenhuysea, Theeboom, and Coalter (2012), which posited that more person-centred approaches within community sport projects, ones bearing relation to youth-work principles and the notion of developing deeper social relationships, are more important than the practice of sport delivery in isolation.

Skill transference and belief

The dregs of life: getting out of ‘large dustbins’ through sport, compassion and understanding

Experience in life, an understanding of deprivation and life chances, and an appreciation of communities with low aspiration were factors that the study participants noted as significantly influential in terms of best practice. In the UK, life in areas that are categorised as areas of social deprivation meant that, for the study participants, they would be working with a diverse group:

“There are those that were on the fringes of being permanent lifetime criminals, to those that have just been unlucky in life and had bits and pieces, to those that were already planning on doing something with their life, but they weren’t quite sure how to do it.” (Jon).

Oftentimes, the lifestyles and background that their participants had experienced impacted how the SDOC&POs operated in the environment of sport *and* social intervention projects. Here, they described how they realised their approaches to working with young people were underpinned by the broader interactions they had with them: the conversations, relationships, ‘banter’³, and shared interests. Specifically, they discussed the discrimination that the young people in their projects had highlighted as normal within their lives (such as through the education system or exchanges and relations with the police). Perceived or otherwise, this had impacted the way the young people in their projects viewed their world and subsequently the manner in which they interacted with others. Correspondingly, this affected the manner in which the SDOC&POs measured and considered their own interactions in the field. Marc provided quite a pertinent explanation of this:

“It’s great to get on with young people and have some kind of shared interests. But it’s just one of those things that is part of the bigger programme and approach that you have to work with. Oftentimes though, you’re working with young people that others will feel that, they are actually just from life’s large dustbin dregs... you’ve gotta understand that and put yourself in their shoes, understand them, build them up and their self-esteem.”

³ ‘Banter’ is a British colloquial term for exchanging teasing, yet friendly remarks.

Similarly, Dave explained that understanding where participants came from and why they took part in or displayed anti-social behaviour was paramount. He told a story about how his team were able to continue drawing on funding streams because of their success, but emphasised that much of this was down to hard work, empathy, and just “plain believing in them” (the young people taking part in their projects):

“I’m not being big-headed about this, but I get on well enough with them to let them know that they can really do things if they put their mind to it. Mentally, I’ve got to design a programme about how we can use functional skills in sport. Because of the work that we’ve done in the community, and how we developed that through using sport as a means to get them to actually, really believe in themselves it can work. If I’m honest though, it’s more because I’m so passionate about it and do believe in them, and that’s what happens, that’s massive.”

In a study of 249 tennis players in Seoul, Bum and Jeon (2016) found that having fun through physical activity significantly raised ideas of self-worth and value to broader communities, and additionally, that increased positive self-esteem arose from wider social interactions. In a sense, this does mirror what may be one of the basic tenets of the present study’s findings, that participation in physical activity, in and of itself, is a direct influencer in terms of increasing participant self-esteem and thus might possibly contribute positively to their social lives, social support, and resultant life chances.

There remains the question, however, of whether this understanding of self-esteem can fully inform how the SDOC&POs in this study saw the benefits of using sport in their projects for their participants’ psychological benefits. Here then, in this context, the concept of resilience is complementary to our understanding of self-esteem. This is because it is structured as an aggregation of a number of characteristics that includes self-esteem itself. Others include the ability to deal with stress, work with others, and problem solve (Ahern, 2006). Existing research supports this by concluding that resilience can be developed within youth given the right parameters, objectives, and underlying knowledge to effect change (Cooper, Estes, & Allen, 2004). Related to this, the SDOC&POs in this study felt that compassion and developing self-belief in their participants could contribute to the development of the aforementioned self-esteem and resilience.

To fulfil this developmental objective the SDOC&POs felt they needed to appreciate the social circumstances and background of the participants that they were presented with. In short, this means they were required to effectively use compassion in their interactions. Whilst based in the field of executive coaching, the work of Wasylshyn and Masterpasqua (2018) lends itself well in this manner to the present study’s findings. Their work centres on an approach that values compassion as integral to effective leadership and, indeed, more efficient, fluent, and productive organisations that value social emotions. Similarly, the approaches often being followed here in the recollections of the SDOC&POs, have the virtue of reflecting the value of respect, of honouring emotions, and of reinforcing our idea of compassion as being fundamental to facilitating increases in self-esteem and resilience.

Sport as the tool: hold on a minute, that’s worked and I didn’t realise that was gonna happen

Subtle nuances aside, all eight study participants talked about the importance of using sport in their projects. This was evident from their thoughts that it was an excellent “tool” that aligned well with wider life skills. As Jon said:

“Quite often you find in deprived areas, because it’s the way that it’s always been, they resign themselves to the fact that it’s actually high unemployment here. So I’m gonna be unemployed there’s not really much jobs and they don’t believe in themselves. And I think sport gives them those skills that they probably wouldn’t get otherwise. Team sports, individual sports, give you different skills and you start to learn.”

Hamid provided further explanation. Much of this came down to the idea that sport was seen as a tool; one that is malleable and has a degree of plasticity which the ‘users’ can adjust and make specific to their aims.

“Think social skills, leadership skills. All of this normal stuff you can pick off from being within a group of people, playing sport. And they’re having fun doing it. And it’s an easy way of doing it. Now if I was a computer geek, it probably wouldn’t work for me. But if somebody said ‘here we go, we can do all this social stuff’ while we’re designing a new game, or designing a new system, well, hold on a minute, that’s worked and I didn’t realise that’s gonna happen. So you find the tool. I just think that sport covers so many different areas.”

The ubiquity of sport and its ability to effect pro-social behaviours captured much of what the study participants identified in their reflections. Characteristics of sport that were considered to be essential in the context of community sport included the fact that they felt that it directly contributed to the success of projects, through enhancing participants' concepts of attainment. As Sam explained:

“Y’know, project wise, yes definitely, people wise, yes definitely, because you can actually see that they start making an effort for themselves after they have gotten used to the constraints and benefits of sport.”

One of the most significant codes within this theme that the data revealed was “sport as the tool”. Here, many of the SDOC&POs talked about how sport was an excellent vehicle to promote certain types of beliefs and behaviours. Jon stated that sport worked particularly well in terms of “*teamwork, teambuilding, and understanding the way that you have to work in life. Sport can be the tool*”. And Martin supported this, adding that “*their social side, their mental side, their emotional intelligence*” could be developed. Danny said that they used sport as they considered it to be “*an effective vehicle to improve behaviour. Because obviously you’ve got to abide by the rules of the game, you’ve got to listen to people that are coaching.*” Hamid shared this sentiment, stating sport is “*going to give you discipline, which does help as you get older. It helps you make new friends.*”

It is worth noting again that the participants in the schemes the SDOC&POs delivered invariably grew up in areas, or households, that had persistent poverty, low incomes, and low educational performance. Added to this, generally the participants in their programmes were either signposted to these sport *and* social intervention schemes through being at risk of offending, or again, were from areas or households where criminality was considered an everyday part of life. The results of this present study indicates that sports type activities positively influenced the sport programme participants' behaviour, discipline, social interactions, attainment, learning, interest in working with others, listening, and their personal development.

Much of this overall development and change in trajectory of the participants' goals might be explained through the previously mentioned social learning theory, PYD, and social capital. For instance, the manner in which the SDOC&POs recalled how working with the young people to improve their behaviours and life ‘direction’ through person-centred approaches, could be explained through the use of social learning theory. The core attributes of PYD are also highly visible within much of the findings, with the facilitation of the emotional resilience and self-esteem of their participants positioned so high within the recollections of the SDOC&POs. Moreover, the development of deeper social relationships, interactions, some more leadership type skills, and just making more friends, can justifiably fall under the remit that is connected to social capital. Indeed, as Schulenkon, Sherry and Rowe (2015) attest in their systematic review of sport-for-development (SFD) literature, the majority of SFD research within the community context uses PYD and social capital as guiding theoretical frameworks despite misgivings around the use of these concepts.

So the question remains of how sport itself might be a powerful agent of development and change. Here, we can draw from studies on sports-based youth development programmes that see sport as secondary in priority to the development of life skills (Perkins & Noam, 2007). These posit that the interdependence, influence, and stress that sport programmes can manifest on participants can result in cognitive, social, and emotional changes in behaviour. Similarly, programmes that have focused on developing life skills themselves, such as the Irish life skills programme for deaf adults that Mathews (2015) outlines, use supportive structures (such as lessons, mentoring, peer support and the like) to enhance what are considered to be the knowledge and skills necessary for modern day life. Within this sort of framework, the scope and nature of what life skills are is contestable. Forde (2014), in an outline of how life skills can be developed in HIV prevention curricula contained within SFD programmes, asserts that the term is vague, yet that “*life skills programmes tend to emphasize individual responsibility and self-governance*” (p.291).

Nevertheless, what we can see is that sports programmes and the use of sport itself can be managed as domains where personal growth and development can be facilitated, and that much of this development relates to broader terminology, use of, and reflections related to life skills. Indeed, the work of Bean, Kramers, Forneris and Camiré (2018), for instance, fully illustrates through their implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer of youth sport, the way in which life skills can be intentionally embedded. Given this, we can understand how the sport *and* social intervention projects in this study repeated exposure to developmentally rich experiences. We can also acknowledge the necessary role of individuals, relationship building, and empowerment. Through this, we can posit that sport is indeed a medium – from the perspectives, recollections, and understanding that the SDOC&POs testified – that easily allows young people to be engaged through designing activities and games that can foster, more readily, the aforementioned life skills and social competencies.

Conclusion

Throughout the present study, the question of whether sport actually does have some form of inherent characteristic that might help at risk youth has persisted. Specifically, it was considered necessary to ask whether any perceived success of sport *and* social intervention programmes are more a product of non-sport elements. For instance, the ancillary benefits of participating in these types of schemes, such as human contact and developing relationships (Coalter, 2007), as opposed to the fact that sport was used. The aims of the present study then were to a) determine whether claims made for sport as a medium to effect changes in pro-social behaviour are with merit, and b) to investigate best practice in community sports projects. These aims were underpinned by the following notion: If we understand that the additional benefits of participating in sports programmes have the capacity to effect ‘change’, and that perhaps other activities could be used in place of sport (for instance, arts and music), then what is it about sport that might help? What characteristics might sport have that lends itself well to changing behaviours?

The SDOC&POs in this study reported that the sport *and* social intervention projects they were involved in had the capacity to increase their participants’ *self-esteem, resilience, and compassion*. However, this was considered to be more in line with the personal affectations and dispositions of the SDOC&POs themselves, as opposed to just the use of sport per se. Yet the role and nature of sport was considered to be crucial in terms of developing interdependence, influence, and cognitive, social, and emotional changes in behaviour. In short, sport was seen as an extremely effective tool to engage young people in activities and games that facilitated the development of life skills, individual responsibility, and self-governance.

The conundrum that we are left with then is that SDOC&POs in the community context require knowledge regarding the use of sport, within the constructs of rules, practice, skill, and adherence. However, this is tempered by the need for them to grasp the complexity of coaching expertise, relationship building, and interpersonal skills in the context of sport *and* social intervention projects. More specifically, the argument needs to be made that a) sport is, in the right hands, an appropriate vehicle/pedagogical tool that can contribute to the promotion of pro-social behaviors and active citizenship, and b) that SDOC&POs need to be sufficiently qualified, competent, and knowledgeable in terms of their awareness and expertise. This is in order to develop participants’ self-efficacy, to develop potentially successful youth-adult relationships and partnerships, and encourage social support through the use of sport sessions. A key recommendation here then is for coach education systems to actively programme in plans/learning that consider the necessity (seen through this research) of effectively using patience, empathy and meaningful interactions with participants in the community context to effect change. This may present a future research opportunity, possibly using other methods (e.g., surveys or questionnaires) to ensure a more representative sample, that could examine (in more depth) the impact and role that self-presentation, empathy, and interpersonal skills play in successful community coaching.

The author acknowledges that whilst the present study offers several new insights, it is not without limitations. These include the fact that the findings are explained through an aggregation of multiple theories that are used extensively within sport. In this fashion then, the present study works less as a piece of research that contributes new theory, and more as a piece of work that contributes to existing knowledge. Furthermore, the number of participants in the study was limited in terms of scope (an area in the south of the UK), numbers (eight), and reliant on the recollections of the SDOC&POs themselves. Moreover, the fact that the SDOC&POs worked in various programmes means that truly generalising these results is arguably more problematic. The results of this study then may not be applicable to other professionals working in the domain of sport and social intervention. Of particular note also, is the fact that the study’s broad objective was to ask whether ‘sport’ possesses essential characteristics and attributes that support the development of pro-social behaviours, aspirations, and community engagement. In many respects, answering this question was only possible through ascertaining the recollections and views of the sample only, rendering the study in this case as one with a clear limitation in terms of how well the research was able to address this fundamental research question.

Irrespective of this, the present study has demonstrated the extent to which sport, from the perspective of experienced SDOC&POs who have worked in community engagement projects, contributes to improvements in participants’ well-being, pro-social behaviours, and notions of active citizenship. We must be wary, however, of how this reflects what some (for instance, Coakley and Pike, 2009) view as an essentialist view and use of sport, and acknowledge that whilst sport will clearly not solve all of the societal problems that some purport it to do, it does highlight the potential that it has in terms of fostering what the present study sees as the critical building blocks for successful projects: developing relationships and trust between participants and coaches. The caveat is that this can perhaps only happen when sport *and* social intervention projects are managed and overseen by those that can view sport through a more critical

viewpoint, one that understands that to contribute to wider social policy issues, pro-social behaviours, and community engagement, a meaningful understanding of human interaction and compassion is necessary.

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Competitive spirit as a form of behavioral addiction: the case study of Michael Jordan

Authors' contribution:

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

When studying biographical narratives constituting “The Michael Jordan Myth,” certain patterns emerge. For example, it is possible to identify mythemes corresponding with Campbell’s concept of the hero’s journey monomyth. This study focuses on a particular pattern, which is a progression of addiction with its phases, axial points, and list of symptoms. One of the most frequently used epithets in regard to the hero of this particular myth is “competitive.” While this is a quality of numerous outstanding athletes, in Jordan’s case competitiveness appears as a dominant quality and a driving force throughout his entire career.

The premise of my study is the assumption that Jordan’s competitive spirit is a symptom of behavioral addiction and winning/defeating rivals is the behavior of an addict. The goal of the study is to use Jordan’s biographies and, based on Jellinek’s model of addiction progression, to verify whether Jordan’s accomplishments on and off the court can be viewed as symptoms of unclassified behavioral addiction.

Keywords: Behavioral addiction, competition, biography, Michael Jordan, Jellinek

Competition as a behavioral addiction

Competition is an inherent component of sport. Therefore, competitiveness and the desire to win are, or at least should be, two qualities forming the character of an athlete. This is especially evident in the case of professional athletes who receive large sums as bonuses from their franchises and leagues as a reward for their achievements. The money also comes from endorsement deals and commercials, both of which are mostly only offered to champions. However, even among athletes, to whom competition is their livelihood, it is possible to distinguish individuals whose competitiveness is at a higher level than the average – those who, in order to win, will exploit their skills and bodies to the extreme. There are also those who will break the code of ethics encapsulated in the “fair-play” principle by, e.g., committing flagrant fouls, pulling opponents’ jerseys, doping, or even bribing referees. To such athletes, victory, whether in an insignificant game during the season or in the Olympic Final, is the end which justifies the means.

One such athlete was definitely Michael Jordan, a former NBA basketball star who, at the turn of the twentieth century, played for the Chicago Bulls and the Washington Wizards. In the 2020 docuseries *The Last Dance*, viewers were constantly reminded how competitive Jordan was, resulting in a series of jokes and Internet memes about “Jordan taking things personally.”¹ In all the biographical narratives on Jordan prior to *The Last Dance*, he was on multiple occasions described as an extremely competitive individual, or as Ervin “Magic” Johnson put it, “I thought I was the most competitive person I ever knew, until I met Michael” (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 9136). Jordan’s competitive spirit exceeded basketball courts, where his passion for winning could be justified by striving to achieve the best results possible, as is typical in sports. In turn, he would be rewarded with tangible, material profits. But how does one justify an episode dating back to Jordan’s college years when he stayed overnight at the home of his dorm roommate Buzz Peterson’s parents and cheated during an innocent card game he played with Peterson and his mother? Peterson recalls that when he caught Jordan cheating, he asked, “Are you really that competitive that you were going to cheat my own mother in cards? You gotta be kidding me” (Taylor, 2003). There was no stake in the game in question apart from the winning itself, and Jordan was a guest at Ms. Peterson’s house.

Athletes’ drive to compete and win is a natural outcome of the fact that they operate in the world of sports, where one’s victory requires another’s loss. Athletes compete, i.e., “try to gain at a rival’s expense” (Nutter & Moore, 1976, p. 40), simply because it is the nature of competition sports. However, athletes’ lucrative contracts and endorsement deals, as well as the passage of time, may temper their motivation and the need to compete. Yet there are athletes, such as LeBron James or Cristiano Ronaldo, whose thirst for competition does not fade away, no matter their age or financial position. Their competitive drive can find its explanation in major theories of motivation, which all name different sources of motivation – defined as “the direction and intensity of effort” (Weinberg & Gould in Stefanek & Peters, 2011) – as the fuel for an athlete’s competitive spirit. According to the achievement goal theory, athletes are driven by ego or task; “they perceive themselves to be successful when they perform better than others (i.e., a normative view of success)” (Stefanek & Peters, p. 416) or, when task-oriented, athletes “view themselves as successful when they put forth their best effort, learn something new, or achieve a personal best” (Stefanek & Peters, p. 416). Jordan was driven by both motivations; he believed he could outplay any defender, and his work ethic and desire to develop his basketball skills were unmatched among his peers. Jordan was also totally confident in his skills, his leadership of the team, and his ability to take (and make) the most difficult and important shots. Such self-confidence, which in the self-efficacy theory is one of the key elements of athletes’ ability to perform at the highest level (Stefanek & Peters, p. 420), would explain Jordan’s seemingly endless highlight reel of high-flying dunks, buzzer-beaters, and championship ceremonies. His success could also be explained by the self-determination theory, according to which athletes’ intrinsic motivation is present when three dimensions (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) of their needs are met.

Autonomy is a sense of control or determination over one’s actions. [...] The need for competence includes peoples’ perception that they can achieve successful outcomes. Relatedness needs would be met if an individual feels satisfied in her or his involvement with others in the social world. (Stefanek & Peters, p. 423)

On the basketball court, Jordan felt he could do whatever he wanted in terms of his own skills and regardless of the head coach’s playbook. Jordan’s faith in victory was unshaken, as he constantly visualized winning plays and shots. He also appreciated his teammates, despite the fact that he would often feel he had to carry the team (which frequently was the case). One of the reasons why Jordan carried his teammates was he refused to believe that, in the end, his team could lose. Jordan not only believed in basketball success, but also loved the game itself. The expectancy value theory (Stefanek & Peters, p. 425) would suggest that Jordan’s expectation of success combined with “subjective task value,” i.e., the ability to see the actual value and benefits of performing a particular activity, motivated Jordan toward his goals – defeating opponents and winning championship titles. Finally, the attribution theory would suggest that Jordan’s constant motivation stemmed from “three dimensions of attributions: controllability (i.e., personally controllable or uncontrollable), locus of causality (i.e., internal or external to oneself), and stability (i.e., changeable or unchangeable over time)” (Stefanek & Peters, p. 417). Jordan was able to fit his individual brilliance into the “triangle offense” executed by the Bulls’ coach, Phil Jackson. He realized the team’s success or failure depended on how well he performed and never shied away from blame or credit for a loss or win. Jordan was also able to adapt to changing conditions. For example, when he was older he gave up explosive dunks and developed a fade-away jump shot, which allowed him to be effective and added stability to his high-level performance.

¹ <https://www.buzzfeed.com/josieayre1/the-last-dance-memes?origin=web-hf>

However, Jordan's competitive drive seemed to exceed the norms of professional sports and motivation theory. Moreover, Jordan's biography makes it possible to suspect that his personality is an addictive one.² Apart from his incessant desire to win in basketball or frequent card games, Jordan has been known for his love of golf, a passion that transformed into a penchant for gambling. In 1993, the media reported that for years, Jordan had frequently bet high stakes on the golf course. He was also criticized for his regular visits to casinos, where he would lose large sums of money. The media spiral of speculation on Jordan's alleged gambling problem escalated that year to the point that when James Jordan (Michael's father) was mugged and murdered, the media speculated that the murder might have been connected with his famous son's gambling debts. Jordan was outraged by these opinions and denied having any problems with gambling. Not until 2005, when asked by Ed Bradley, the host of *60 Minutes*, whether he had a gambling problem, did Jordan say, "Yeah, I've gotten myself into situations where I would not walk away and I've pushed the envelope [...] Is that compulsive? Yeah, it depends on how you look at it. If you're willing to jeopardize your livelihood and your family, then yeah" (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 7421-7423). At the same time, he stressed that he had never broken the law, jeopardized his family, or suffered a significant financial loss.

The episodes of Jordan's life described above are the premise and main reason why Jordan is the subject of this case study. The purpose of the study is to establish whether it is possible to use Jordan's biographies to determine whether his apparently obsessive need to defeat his opponents, which became an immanent part of his career and resume, can be viewed as a form of addiction and thus open a dialogue on understanding certain individuals in sports (or business, politics, etc.) as competition addicts. It is my contention that motivation and competition theories are insufficient means to explain Jordan's competitive spirit, and that the explanation can be found in the addiction theory.

Addiction theories vary in their explanations of the definition and sources of addiction and how addicts function. However, addiction theorists agree on the symptoms that allow a subject to be classified as an addict. For example, a recent metaphysical model proposed by ontological addiction theory (OAT) follows Griffiths's "components" model of addiction (Griffiths, 2005). OAT defines addiction as "the unwillingness to relinquish an erroneous and deep-rooted belief in an inherently existing 'self' or 'I' as well as the 'impaired functionality' that arises from such a belief" (Van Gordon et al., 2018) and focuses on the metaphysical approach to addiction. However, Griffiths relies on the definition by Marlatt et al., which defined addictive behavior as "...a repetitive habit pattern that increases the risk of disease and/or associated personal and social problems" (Griffiths, 2005). Nevertheless, the criteria for addictive behavior proposed by OAT are the same as Griffiths's and each of the models "[...] asserts that addiction features components of (a) salience, (b) mood modification, (c) tolerance, (d) withdrawal, (e) conflict, and (f) relapse" (Van Gordon et al., 2018). In order to verify whether Jordan can be classified as a "competition addict," this study makes use of the list of signs indicating addiction proposed by Alavi et al. (2012) as it applies Griffiths's model to behavioral addiction. Subsequently, by means of the Jellinek Curve of Addiction Stages³ chart of the phases of addiction progression (adjusted for the purposes of this study), Jordan's life was examined from a perspective of his history of competing, both in sports and off the court.

Michael Jordan's addiction assumption and diagnosis

In order to establish whether competing can be viewed in Michael Jordan's case as the behavior of an addict, I looked into whether it is possible to observe the following in Jordan's behaviors: symptoms indicating an addiction to competition, how many of these symptoms can be identified, and how those symptoms manifested. I accepted playing basketball on a professional level as the main manifestation of Jordan's addictive behavior as this was the most time consuming activity during Jordan's career as an active player. The analysis of Jordan's behaviors connected with competing was carried out through the prism of indicators listed by Alavi et al.

1. Strong desire or a sense of compulsion to perform addictive activity.

The previously mentioned compulsion to compete and win characteristic of Jordan has been thoroughly described by the athlete's biographers, including Naughton, Halberstam, and Lazenby. In numerous instances, it is presented as the dominant feature of Jordan's character. For example, Lazenby cites Tom Konchalski's opinion on Jordan:

² <https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/addictive-personality/>

³ <https://lastingrecovery.com/addiction/about-alcoholism/stages-of-alcoholism/>

“I don’t think he would have had this all-consuming competitiveness. The thing that really set him apart is he had tremendous competitiveness, that XYY chromosome in terms of competitiveness. That’s maybe been his downfall in other areas of his life, but in basketball that defined him. That transcended his athleticism. He wouldn’t have had that because what happens with AAU is there’s always another game. You will play three games in a day. You can lose a game in disgrace and two hours later, there’s always the next game. So you’re not as focused on winning. Winning’s not a critical obsession, and that’s what set Michael Jordan apart from other players, that he was an obsessively competitive player. Had he grown up in an AAU culture, he would have lost his winning edge. He would have lost what his real thing is, and that’s his competitiveness.” (2014, loc. 1032-1038)

In the documentary *Michael Jordan: His Airness*, Jordan himself admits “To compete, to win... it’s all I live for, really” (Weitzman, 1999).

The statements quoted above, which serve as a representative sample of the descriptions of Jordan’s competitiveness, indicate the occurrence of Symptom No. 1.

2. Difficulty in controlling behavior connected with performing the addictive activity in terms of beginning, ending, and level of performance.

Jordan has been known, among other things, for scoring points during games in bursts of offensive plays (e.g., 15 points in a row); the same can be said about the victories he collected. In his basketball career alone, Jordan won ten NBA scoring titles, including consecutive wins for seven and three years, respectively (1987-93 and 1996-98). The two-year gap is the result of Jordan’s temporary retirement and absence from the NBA. Similarly, Jordan and the Bulls won championships in bulk: the first three-peat in the years 1991-93, and the second one in 1996-98. In the 1990s, it seemed as if there was nothing and nobody who could stop Jordan, who refused to yield victory. His inability to accept losses and the fact that he was a “sore loser” are illustrated in the three descriptions below. The first one portrays Jordan during basketball practices:

“He and I practiced every day together and he always had to win. If it was a game of Horse and you beat him, you would have to play another game until he won,” Smith said. “You didn’t go home until he had won.” (Halberstam, 2012, pp. 20-21)

The second description concerns an insignificant NBA regular season game. Bill Wennington, a member of the Chicago Bulls, recalls:

“I remember the game back... it was Vancouver. We should’ve lost the game. We were down twelve points with six minutes to go. Michael just said ‘Well, that’s enough. I can’t let this happen’ and the game was over. He scored nineteen points in six minutes.” (Winik, 1996)

Chicago won the game. The third story presents Jordan in his free time, which one would expect to be free of competition:

Early on in his Chicago years, Jordan bought a Ping-Pong table and placed it in the recreation room of his apartment. He was not a good Ping-Pong player at first, and it enraged him that he always lost to Howard White, the Nike ambassador and his close friend. Charles Oakley was a good Ping-Pong player too, and it infuriated Jordan that both men could beat him on his home court. White was amused watching Oakley and Jordan, these two immense men, playing Ping-Pong in so small a room with so low a ceiling—the room seemed filled with competitive energy. If you beat Jordan at Ping-Pong, White learned, then you had to play again—and again—until finally he won. (Halberstam, 2012, p. 229)

Jordan’s lack of ability to give up and let go is summarized by Rick Reilly, a sports journalist: “He [Jordan] goes all out, he’s the ultimate chase better. Lose, double up, lose, double up” (Taylor, 2000).

The statements quoted above, which serve as a representative sample of the descriptions of Jordan’s lack of control in stopping a competitive activity, indicate the occurrence of Symptom No. 2.

3. Concentration of life around performing an addictive activity.

Both during and after his basketball career, Jordan was described as the most hardworking player during practices and in games. One of Jordan’s coaches, Doug Collins, said “He [Jordan] was your hardest worker. He competed every day. That filtered down through your team, so as a coach you never had to talk about the work ethic of your team because your best player always brought that” (Kempf, 2000).

All of Jordan's life was subjugated to developing his skills and maintaining the best physical condition possible. Jordan, as most professional athletes do, kept a proper diet and exercised regularly. However, his preparations exceeded standard exercise. When the very physical Detroit Pistons physically abused Jordan during games in the late 1980s, he hired a personal trainer, Tim Grover, who prepared a special weight training program for him. Also, at Jordan's request, Grover created a special venue to practice free throw shooting with a flickering strobe light, the purpose of which was to get Jordan used to working without the ability to concentrate when shooting in-game free throws, which always involved the blinding lights of fans' and reporters' camera flashes. All of the above reflected Jordan's pursuit of perfection and successive victories, indicating the occurrence of Symptom No. 3.

4. Increased tolerance to addictive activity (need for higher doses/level of the activity in order to feel the effects previously achieved with lower doses/levels).

In the first seven years Michael Jordan spent in the NBA, he had only one goal in mind – winning the championship. Once he achieved this goal in 1991, his hunger for winning only grew. In the documentary *Michael Jordan: His Airness*, it is stated that “[...] as the ‘92 season began, it was clear that his hunger for winning was far from satisfied” (Weitzman, 1999). In the film, Jordan himself describes the experience and the feeling in the following manner: “It’s like the guy in the king-of-the-hill situation. Once you’re on top of the hill, you want to defend it” (Weitzman, 1999). After 1991, achievements of lesser rank than winning championships did not satisfy Jordan (until his tolerance towards addictive activity was lowered) and he won six championship titles, which indicates the occurrence of Symptom No. 4.

5. Physiological symptoms of withdrawal occurring when addictive activity ceases or decreases, resulting in a withdrawal syndrome specific to the activity, or performing the same or similar activity in order to ease or avoid symptoms of abstinence.

In Jordan's case, withdrawal syndrome is understood as behaviors and emotional states during periods with no competition or after a loss. Jordan has suffered many losses, both in his professional career and his private life. Even though losing is an integral part of professional sports – there has been no athlete who has experienced only victories, especially in team sports played in the system of regular seasons and play-off phases – Jordan could never stand losing a game, whether an important game or a scrimmage. He could not speak to his teammates for days after losing a game during practice.

Jordan also seemed barely able to do without competition. During his professional career, Jordan was exposed to withdrawal syndrome by necessity during the off-season break, and he looked for any opportunity to compete. His passion for golf, which he played daily (18 or 36 holes) during the summer break was common knowledge, as was his fondness for cards, pool, and Ping-Pong. However, the most distinct example of withdrawal was during Jordan's retirement from the NBA in 1993 after winning the third consecutive championship. Having unlaced his Air Jordans, the man decided to attempt to become a professional baseball player, despite the fact that he last played baseball fifteen years earlier on his middle school varsity team. Nevertheless, for a year and a half he joined the roster of the minor league Birmingham Barons. Thus after withdrawing from basketball competition, he still actively competed in a different sport. Jordan's conviction that he could make it to MLB was perceived as the star's arrogance by some and as a desire to fulfill his father's childhood dream by others. The episode can also be viewed as a “sense of empowerment” typical of the split-personality characteristic of addicts, which would indicate the occurrence of Symptom No. 5.

6. Performing addictive activity despite obvious evidence of harmful consequences.

The risk of injury is ever present in sports and is a risk every athlete agrees to take. Many athletes play with broken fingers, dislocated joints, or other ailments, accepting the experience of pain. Jordan is no exception. During the 1991 NBA Finals, he played with a sore toe and, when the specially-adjusted sneakers meant to protect the toe were limiting his jumping, Jordan switched to his regular shoes. His choice to endure pain in return for greater mobility became legendary (Halberstam, 2012, p. 281). Such behaviors occurred frequently throughout Jordan's career; however, Jordan's desire to play in Game 5 of the 1997 NBA Finals (known as “The Flu Game”) defied common sense and the instinct of self-preservation. What follows is Halberstam's depiction of Jordan's physical condition before the game:

[...] he [Jordan] woke up violently ill before Game Five of the NBA Finals against the Utah Jazz. Whether it was altitude sickness or food poisoning no one was ever sure. Later, it was reported that he had woken

up with a fever of 103. That was not true: His temperature was high but not that high, not over 100, but he had been so ill during the night that it seemed impossible that he would play. At about 8 A.M., Jordan's bodyguards called Chip Schaefer, the team trainer, to tell him that Jordan was deathly ill. Schaefer rushed to Jordan's room and found him curled up in a fetal position, wrapped in blankets and pathetically weak. He had not slept at all. He had an intense headache and had suffered violent nausea throughout the night. The greatest player in the world looked like a frail, weak zombie. It was inconceivable that he might play that day. [...] In the locker room, Jordan's teammates were appalled by what they saw. Michael's skin, normally quite dark, was an alarming color; somewhere between white and gray, Bill Wennington remembered, and his eyes, usually so vital, looked dead. (2012, p. 13)

Jordan played forty-four out of forty-eight minutes of the game and scored thirty-eight points, including the key four ones in the last seconds of the game that cemented his team's victory. "I almost played myself into passing out," Jordan said. "I came in and I was dehydrated, and it was all to win a basketball game" (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 8801). The image of a staggering Jordan struggling to walk off the court while being held by his teammate, Scottie Pippen,⁴ pointedly illustrates Symptom No. 6.

Taking into consideration the fact that only three out of six symptoms must occur in order to diagnose addiction, Jordan's "six out of six" (and this is not a reference to him winning six championship titles in six visits to the NBA Finals) allows him to be considered a person addicted to competing and winning in the form of defeating his opponents.

Stages of Michael Jordan's addiction progression

In order to confirm the above diagnosis, and to verify whether Jordan is still an addict, Jordan's history of addictive competing based on an adjusted Jellinek's Curve of Addiction Stages will be presented.

I. THE INITIAL STAGE

AXIAL POINT – "INITIATION"

In all of the biographical narratives on Michael Jordan, his one-on-one games as a child against his brother, Larry, are pointed to as the first experience of competition which initiated the eleven-year-old boy to the thrill of competing and awakened his need to win. According to Halberstam, "The key to Michael Jordan's fierce competitiveness, friends from his junior high, high school, and college days thought, lay in his rivalry with his older brother Larry," (2012, p. 19), while Lazenby writes:

Though Jordan was nearly a year younger, he already stood above his stronger, older brother. Michael was mouthier, but they both talked trash, anything to get under the other's skin. [...] Day after day after day, they went at each other, with Larry able to use his strength to dominate his younger brother despite the height disadvantage. (2014, loc. 673-676)

In addition,

It was the same everywhere he went, explained George Mumford, the psychologist who worked with Jordan as a pro player. Each opponent loomed as a Larry to be conquered. Much later, the mythology of the one-on-one games would bring his brother a certain status among Michael's coterie, first in college and later in Chicago. (2014, loc. 694-696)

SYMPTOMS

1. **COMPETING FOR PLEASURE** – When he gave a speech after being inducted into The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2009, Jordan described his early days of competing in the following manner: "My competitive nature has gone a long way from the first time I picked up any sport. Baseball, football, run track, basketball... anything to miss class, I played it." (OfficialHoophall, n.d.)
2. **INCREASED ZEST FOR COMPETITION AND HIGHER LEVELS OF CHALLENGE** – The whole basketball career of Jordan documents his growing hunger for competition and challenges, from the games against

⁴ <https://www.sbnation.com/nba/2017/6/11/15778584/michael-jordans-flu-game-1997-nba-finals-chicago-bulls>

Larry to playing for school varsity teams and the UNC Tar Heels, to finally reaching the NBA, where he first won a championship and eventually won six and gained the status of G.O.A.T. A specific example of this symptom is a story about how Jordan did not make the varsity team at Laney High:

It was the worst day of Jordan's young life. The list was alphabetical, so he focused on where the Js should be, and it wasn't there, and he kept reading and rereading the list, hoping somehow that he had missed it, or that the alphabetical listing had been done incorrectly. That day he went home by himself and went to his room and cried. [...]

Years later, the Laney coaches realized that they had not handled the decision well, not cushioning it and letting Michael know that his time would come, and they had made it seem even worse when they had taken his close friend. Roy Smith thought the coaches were crazy—he might be taller, but he knew Michael was better than he was. "We knew Michael was good," Fred Lynch, the Laney assistant coach, said later, "but we wanted him to play more and we thought the jayvee was better for him." He easily became the best player on the jayvee that year. [...] He was so good, in fact, that the jayvee games became quite popular. The entire varsity began to come early so they could watch him play in the jayvee games. (Halberstam, 2012, p. 21)

II. THE WARNING STAGE

AXIAL POINT – “BLACKING OUT”

It must be noted that none of the biographical materials on Jordan's life and career mentions anything directly pointing to him losing due to a preoccupation with competition or losing track of time. However, certain descriptive narratives to a lesser or greater extent suggest that such “blackouts” might have occurred. At least, certain events are described in such a fashion.

Chronologically, early symptoms of Jordan's losing himself in competition can be discerned in descriptions of the previously mentioned brotherly basketball duels, which would last until late at night: “The contests quickly turned physical, then heated. When the yelling and arguing grew to a pitch, Deloris Jordan would step to the back door to enforce the peace. Some days she had to order them into the house” (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 674-675).

SYMPTOMS

1. LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO COMPETE – Just as with the second symptom of the Initial Stage, Jordan's entire career as an athlete is a testament to continuous competition. An early example of searching for or leaving the door open to competition is the “Love of the Game” clause included in his first contract with the Chicago Bulls. The clause allowed Jordan to bypass the standard limitations clubs place on their players. Below is Lazenby's report on the matter:

One key element was a “Love of the Game” clause that Jordan had insisted upon. The standard NBA contract called for the agreement to be voided if the player was injured in some activity other than a team-sanctioned one. Jordan wanted the freedom to compete wherever and whenever he wanted with impunity, as defined by his love of the game. The team made the concession in light of the favorable terms the Jordan family had approved. (2014, loc. 3517-3519)

2. INITIATING COMPETITION – In college, Jordan unceasingly looked for ways to demonstrate his athletic superiority, even outside of basketball. He kept challenging his friends and teammates and always took losses badly.

The other thing his teammates came to realize was that he was driven by an almost unparalleled desire – or need – to win. The ghost of losing to his brother Larry in backyard contests still lived. All top athletes are driven, and no one made the Carolina roster unless he had been by far the hardest-working kid in his neighborhood, his high school, and finally his high school conference, but Jordan was self-evidently the most driven of all. He simply hated to lose, on the court in big games, on the court in little games, in practice, in Monopoly games with his friends (if he fell far behind late in a game, he was capable of sending his opponents' hotels and houses crashing to the floor with one great sweep of his arm). In card games and pool games, his passion to win was obvious – in fact, he often seemed to change the rules to ensure his victory. A pool shot that he missed did not count because someone spoke just as he was about to shoot. Once when Carolina was playing Virginia at Charlottesville, he and his teammates were hanging around a game room,

and Jordan issued a challenge to play anyone in pool. Matt Doherty took it up, they played, and to Jordan's surprise Doherty won. Jordan threw down his stick, studied the table carefully, announced, "This table's not regulation size," and stomped out. (Halberstam, 2012, p. 100)

Jordan displayed similar behaviors throughout his career. For example, during the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Jordan wanted to play cards every night with the greats of basketball – Larry Bird and Ervin "Magic" Johnson. (He beat them on the basketball court.)

3. WINNING RESULTS IN A BETTER MOOD, BRINGS RELIEF, RELEASES TENSION – This symptom can be observed in all athletes who win. In Jordan's case, the best example of relief resulting from winning and the tension which preceded it is winning the first championship title. For seven seasons in the NBA, Jordan, despite individual accolades, had not been able to lead his team to the title. What added to Jordan's growing frustration was the fact that his team was regularly eliminated from play-offs by one team – the Detroit Pistons, who blocked the Bulls' way to the Finals in the years 1989-1990.

For three straight years, the Bulls would meet the Pistons in the playoffs. And for three straight years, they would suffer a bitter defeat.

Jordan: "I felt it was very disappointing each and every time that we ended up getting to this hurdle and couldn't get over it."

With each passing year, Michael's frustration grew deeper while the whispers grew louder that Jordan was simply a one-man show who could not elevate the performance of his team.

Jordan: "I had to contend with people saying that a scoring champion doesn't win championships, which just drove me nuts." (Weitzman, 1999)

In 1991, there was a breakthrough and Jordan finally won the championship he so desperately coveted. The video and film materials presenting the Bulls' victory all show Jordan clasping the trophy and weeping tears of happiness and relief. This outpour of emotions, uncharacteristic of the alpha dogs professional athletes usually are, reflects the relief of tension the victory brought Jordan.

4. COMPETITION IN PROGRESS RESULTS IN "LOSING TRACK OF TIME/AWARENESS" – As was already mentioned, the study of biographical materials on Jordan has not revealed descriptions that would *explicitly* demonstrate occurrences of Symptom No. 4. Below are three fragments of different biographical materials that suggest Jordan may have lost himself in competition. The first passage describes an incident in 1991:

During a two-day break in the playoff series with Philadelphia, Jordan and writer Mark Vancil motored over to an Atlantic City casino. They dragged back to the team hotel about six thirty the next morning, and Jordan still made the Bulls' practice at ten a.m., which was no great surprise to anyone who knew him. The media took note of it, and later it would be cited as the first tremor in his rolling quake of troubles.

Basketball brought him back to a reality of sorts. *The Bulls dispensed with the Sixers, setting up the only rematch that Jordan wanted: the Bad Boys in the Eastern Conference championship series.* (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 6468-6472)

In the next passage, Halberstam describes Jordan's emotional state after winning a practice game of the US Basketball Team in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona:

*Jordan seemed to be on some kind of **competitive high**, he thought. [...] There he was on the sideline [...] knowing that he had dominated the play among the best players in the world. As Jordan danced, Magic Johnson sat thirty yards away telling a few reporters, "We just screwed up. We got him mad. We all did too much talking. You'd think by now we'd know better."*

Jan Hubbard walked over to talk to Jordan. "You just have to win every time, don't you?" he said. (2012, pp. 301-302)

It is also worth citing memories of that stint (Barcelona '92) from other members of the Dream Team who have shared their impressions on how Jordan operated during the pre-Olympic practice in Monte Carlo:

Drexler: I remember thinking that...Does this guy ever sleep?

Jordan: Golf, thirty-six holes. I'm playing that tomorrow, too.

Drexler: He would do more things and be ready to practice and play as much as anybody.

Robinson: The thing that I remember the most was going out and playing golf with Michael Jordan before a game and I thought, "Man, I'm going to be exhausted tonight!" And Michael had just ridiculous energy and was phenomenal.

Barkley: We played cards in Magic's room till five o'clock in the morning pretty much every night. It was so much fun.

Krzyzewski: He's like a bionic guy. He'd play cards, play golf, play basketball. I don't know when he ever slept. Finally, after a ball game, he was just lying down and I looked at him and I said: "I think that's the first time he's gone to sleep... on the whole trip." (Levitt, 2012)

Ervin "Magic" Johnson adds,

"Michael tried to get me on his schedule over there, and I just couldn't do it," Magic says today. "I got so I could play cards all night, and so did some of the other guys. But then to go out and play eighteen, thirty-six holes of golf? Then come back and get 20 in the game like it's nothing?

Man, nobody could do that." (McCallum, 2013, pp. 638-639)

5. ATTEMPTS TO COMPETE IN HIDING OR AS A WAY TO COPE WITH WITHDRAWAL SYNDROME – As mentioned above, Jordan could take up any basketball challenge at any time he wanted because of the "Love of the Game" clause. To do that, he still needed opponents. Even in college, Jordan found a way to challenge and compete against himself when there was no one to play basketball, cards, or Ping-Pong against. The way in question was golf, which turned into a passion Jordan devoted more and more time to, as was reported on by *Sports Illustrated* journalist, Jack McCallum, in his article "Horns Of A Dilemma": "Jordan figures he gets his rest during the off-season, now that he substitutes eight or 10 hours of golf a day for the three or four hours he used to devote to playground basketball" (McCallum, 1993, p. 35).

Jordan's passion for golf was in the public record; what was kept secret for a long time was the fact that he gambled on the golf course. The symptom of competing in hiding could be observed when it was revealed that Jordan would bet large sums of money on his golf games. As was already mentioned, in 1993 Jordan became an object of harsh criticism from the press and a subject of the investigation launched by then-NBA commissioner, David Stern. The goal of the investigation was to establish whether Jordan had violated the league's rules by playing golf for money. The suspicions of Jordan's gambling addiction stemmed from a book by Richard Esquinas, *Michael & Me: Our Gambling Addiction... My Cry for Help!*, in which Esquinas claims that Jordan had lost a total sum of \$1.25 million to him on the golf course. Jordan initially denied this claim, but later paid Esquinas "somewhere between \$200,000 and \$300,000" (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 6957-6958).

Gambling also appears in Jordan's biography as a means to cope with withdrawal syndrome, i.e., losing. The same year when the golf gambling story broke out, Jordan exposed himself to criticism and gambling accusations when he spent the night before an important game in a casino. In 1993 in the Eastern Conference Finals, the Bulls were up against the New York Knicks. The first two games of the series were played in New York. After the Bulls lost Game 1, Jordan took a private jet to Atlanta, where, according to the press, he was seen at a casino until late at night. His actions were heavily criticized, especially after Chicago lost the second game – the one preceded by the trip to the casino. Lazenby describes the situation as thus:

The outcome was further weighted in the aftermath with a New York Times report that Jordan had been seen at an Atlantic City casino in the wee hours before Game 2, suggesting that perhaps he wasn't properly rested for competition. Jackson and Krause quickly came to his defense. "There is no problem with Michael Jordan," Krause told reporters. "He cares about winning and is one of the great winners of all time."

"We don't need a curfew," Jackson added. "These are adults... You have to have other things in your life or the pressure becomes too great."

Jordan himself was unrepentant [...]. (2014, loc. 7160-7164)

His reaction to the media hype was to refuse granting any interviews.

III. THE CRITICAL STAGE

AXIAL POINT – “REMATCH”

On numerous occasions, Jordan would act out towards his opponents after a loss or (in his mind) challenge to his athletic abilities. In all those cases, Jordan felt compelled to prove that a loss was “an accident at work” or that a person questioning his skills was mistaken. The first such instance of significance was when, as previously mentioned, Jordan failed to make the high school varsity team as a freshman. The cut propelled Jordan to work even harder on his basketball skills, as did his desire to get back at the coaches. In 2009, more than thirty years after the event in question, Jordan mentioned the cut during his Basketball Hall of Fame induction speech:

Leroy Smith was the guy when I got cut, he made the team... on the varsity team. [...] But he started that whole process for me because when he made the team and I didn't, I wanted to prove not just to Leroy Smith, not just to myself, but to the coach who actually picked Leroy over me... I wanted to make sure you understood you made a mistake, dude! (OfficialHoophall, n.d.)

SYMPTOMS

1. REMORSE – “MORAL HANGOVER” – An unpleasant incident took place during a routine Chicago Bulls practice game in 1996. Phil Jackson, the team’s head coach, split the Bulls into two teams and ordered a scrimmage. The player who was tasked to defend against Jordan, Steve Kerr, was a foot shorter and forty pounds lighter. Jordan treated scrimmages as seriously as he did the Finals games and gave Kerr a hard time. Kerr decided to stand up to Jordan. Below is how Jordan remembers that practice game:

Phil [Jackson] put Steve Kerr opposite of me, but he was giving Steve all the calls. I'm getting like really ticked off, so I started to play very, very physical. Well, Steve started giving me hard fouls. Next thing you know I hauled off and just whacked him, right. And then Phil threw me out of practice, and I get home and I'm just like really hurt. They gave me Steve's phone number; I got his answering machine. I said “Steve, I am so sorry. You know, my anger got the best of me.” (Taylor, 2003)

In the film, right after Jordan states the above, one of his teammates, in a separate clip, adds that whenever Jordan lost it, he would always feel remorse and apologize to those teammates on whom he took his anger out.

2. “TAKING IT OUT ON SOMEBODY” BRINGS RELIEF – Just as every loss resulted in a bad mood for Jordan, every victory brought him joy and relief, especially when it was preceded by a competition marked by defeats. The most illuminating example of such a sequence was the rivalry between the Chicago Bulls and Detroit Pistons in the years 1988-91. For the first three years, the Pistons would eliminate the Bulls from play-offs, thus preventing Jordan from reaching his ultimate goal of winning the world championship. When the Bulls finally defeated the Pistons in the Eastern Conference Finals, a weight was lifted off their chest.

Halberstam describes it in a mystical fashion, writing that “The Bulls won handily. They had swept the Pistons; the demons were exorcised” (Halberstam, 2012, p. 274), while Lazenby reports:

Rather than join Thomas in the protest, Dumars stopped to congratulate his foe. He too was upset with Jordan's comments, but he remembered the pain in Jordan's face at the end of each of the previous seasons. “That look is the reason I stopped and shook his hand when they beat us,” Dumars recalled in 2012. “I was not going to walk past the guy and not shake his hand. I shook Phil's hand and Michael's hand and a few of the other guys. I figured if that guy can shake my hand with that kind of hurt and disappointment he had in his face, there's no way I'm going to walk off this court and not shake his hand.” (2014, loc. 6507-6511)

Lazenby also writes:

The vanquishing of the Bad Boys had been such a hurdle for Jordan and his Bulls that even though they still faced the league championship series, they couldn't help but pause for celebration, memorably kicked off by Jerry Krause. (2014, loc. 6524-6526)

Also, the viewers of *Michael Jordan: His Airness* are, at one point, informed that “Finally earning their vindication, the Bulls completed a four-game sweep and put the Pistons nightmare behind them” (Weitzman, 1999). As enormous as the relief was, it did not last long; a few days after defeating the Pistons, Jordan went up against “Magic” Johnson in the NBA Finals and eventually won the championship title he so intensively desired. A year

later he won another one, and then another, and later three more in a row. Altogether, Jordan and the Bulls won the championship six times in the span of eight years.

3. **NEGLECTING FAMILY AND MARITAL CONFLICTS** – Although the life of a professional athlete involves long hours spent at work (team practices, individual practices, games, press conferences, etc.) and being on the road, Jordan was for a long time portrayed as a man devoted to his family, a loving husband and caring father. This all changed in 2002 when Juanita (Jordan's first wife) filed for divorce.

That January, in the midst of it all, Juanita Jordan filed for divorce in Chicago, and soon a reporter from the Sun-Times showed up in the Wizards' locker room to question Jordan about the split. Interview sessions with Jordan, dating back to Chicago, had always focused on basketball issues. Now, it was incongruous, painful for some, to witness the confrontation, which came after a win over the Los Angeles Clippers. The reporter asked if his divorce was inevitable. "None of your business," Jordan shot back. A Washington publication offered a detailed account of his attempts that same night after the game to make a play for a woman in a Washington nightclub, with help from members of his entourage, including Tim Grover. (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 9882-9886)

Though never officially confirmed, Juanita's decision to file for divorce was rumored to have been the outcome of not only Jordan's alleged infidelity, but also of Jordan's return to the NBA after three years away from actively playing the game. This return shattered the family's daily life, which was so important to Mrs. Jordan.

4. **MISSING WORK** – Jordan was, among other things, known for being "[...] determined to be Michael Jordan every night. I never got the impression that he threw his shoes out or sent his uniform out there and take the night off" (Weitzman, 1999). Naturally, injuries cause players to be absent from work. However, they are a risk to all players. The one which eliminated Jordan from playing in the 1985-86 season was the result of him playing "[...] with that level of intensity who can still do it every night, who is a target every night" (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 3935-3936). Moreover, apart from playing, professional athletes are contractually obliged to perform in areas outside of the sport that are also considered to be part of their profession, e.g., public appearances. Lazenby writes about an instance which exemplifies Symptom No. 4:

The same resentment surfaced just weeks later when Jordan decided not to join the team in the traditional Rose Garden ceremony with President George Bush. Instead, he headed off on a golf trip with a group of pals that included childhood friend David Bridgers. [...]

While they were out, Michael basically told Horace that he wasn't going to see President Bush. Michael said, "It's not obligatory. It's on my time, and I have other things to do." [...]

"No way am I going," Jordan told reporters when asked about the traditional visit. "No one asked me if the date was convenient. It's OK if the other guys go, but the White House is just like any other house. It's just cleaner." (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 6722-6733)

In this context, it can be said that Jordan did not show up for work because he preferred to compete on the golf course.

5. **JUSTIFYING COMPETING ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS** – Jordan never had to justify competing – the nature of his profession was to compete. Nevertheless, the family problems described above were, to a certain extent, the result of the fact that Jordan seemed to bore easily with "ordinary" life and kept coming back to active competition.
6. **GROWING AGGRESSIVENESS, CONFLICTS WITH THE LAW** – During his NBA career, Jordan was known as a vicious "trash-talker." However, as this did not correspond with the promoted image of him as a nice and likable guy, this aspect of Jordan's basketball arsenal was downplayed in promotional materials and sports articles. While in the 1993 documentary *Michael Jordan: Air Time*, Jordan admits that "No matter what trash you talk, we're gonna talk the most trash and then we're gonna back it up" (Winik, 1993), this is the only such statement from Jordan's career. Only after Jordan retired for good did stories come out about him verbally intimidating, discrediting, and tormenting his opponents. He sometimes did this in a humorous fashion, e.g., by pointing out that a player wearing Air Jordans should not talk trash to the man whose likeness is on the shoes,

but he could also be malicious and aggressive. One of such stories concerns a game between the Chicago Bulls and Charlotte Hornets in 1995:

At a key point during the '95 playoff series between the Bulls and Charlotte Hornets, Jordan backed off of the five-foot-three Bogues and told him, "Shoot it, you fucking midget." Bogues missed the shot, lost his confidence, and later reportedly told Johnny Bach that the play started his career down the path to ruin. (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 8206-8208)

Similar, if not worse, is the story of how Jordan attacked a much younger teammate, Kwame Brown, in 2003:

Meanwhile, Leahy discovered the roster shell-shocked at what it meant to be Jordan's teammate. The initial thought was that Kwame Brown might turn out to be an athletic young frontcourt player [...]

Brown was a lighthearted kid from a troubled family when he stepped into camp with Jordan. He had smallish hands for a post player and almost no clue of how to please his new boss. [...] Someone leaked to Leahy that Jordan had screamed at the new kid and called him a "faggot" in front of the team. It didn't play well in the Post that week, nor later in Leahy's book, When Nothing Else Matters.

Krause, meanwhile, was working the phones, digging for information from his sources on the Wizards staff. "Kwame was an outstanding prospect," Krause remembered. "I heard that Michael got on his ass so hard that he ruined that kid. His father was in jail. His mother was going to jail. He had all kinds of family problems. He was not the kind of kid you scream at. According to the people I knew on that club, Michael wrecked him." (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 9780-9791)

Jordan, due to his megastar position and the billions of dollars he generated, could get away with many questionable behaviors, especially in the NBA. However, once his gambling practices were revealed, Jordan found himself in conflict with the law.

It was in the wake of these events that Jordan's first real troubles surfaced. In December, police surveillance of a Charlotte man, a convicted cocaine dealer named James "Slim" Bouler, turned up a \$57,000 check that Jordan had written to him. Bouler was later charged with money laundering after a tax-evasion investigation. Both Bouler and Jordan told authorities that the money was a loan, but Jordan was soon caught up in Bouler's troubles and would later be served with a subpoena to testify in the case against him.

Then in February 1992, a bail bondsman, Eddie Dow, was murdered during a robbery at his home. Thieves took \$20,000 in cash from a metal briefcase on the premises but left three checks worth \$108,000 written by Jordan. The lawyer handling Dow's estate confirmed that the checks were for gambling debts owed by Jordan to a North Carolina contractor named Dean Chapman and two other men. Press reports revealed that Jordan often hosted small gatherings for golfing and gambling at his Hilton Head Island residence, where Jordan had lost the money. Dow had been to at least three such gatherings, according to his attorney. Jordan was also known to host Mike's Time, a gathering for golf and high-stakes poker before training camp each season.

The reports prompted NBA commissioner David Stern to issue a reprimand to Jordan. The league soon launched the first of two "investigations" into Jordan's activities, although they were limited in scope. (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 6754-6765)

Both these investigations finished with Jordan being cleared of all charges.

7. NEGLECTING LOOKING AFTER PERSONAL APPEARANCE – Jordan always took care of his appearance, both in terms of his physique, which is a requirement for any professional athlete, and in terms of his outfits. He even admitted that he paid too much attention to how people saw him on the occasions of public appearances. Materials presenting Jordan as a private person also depict him as an elegant man, even when he was wearing a tracksuit.

He looked better in sweats, one member of the team that shot his Nike commercials noted, than most movie stars did in black tie. "Make me look good," Jordan would admonish Jim Riswold, the Portland advertising man who was in charge of the Nike commercials, before each shoot. Riswold once told him, "Michael, I co-

uld shoot you pushing little ladies into onrushing cars in the middle of downtown traffic or throwing puppies into boiling water and you'd still look good.” (Halberstam, 2012, p. 11)

Although Jordan had his share of poor fashion choices, it is impossible to demonstrate the occurrence of Symptom No. 7.

8. **SEXUAL DRIVE DISORDERS** – Jordan’s sex life and the mores of his sexual prowess is not a topic touched on by his biographers. What is known is that he was and most probably still is sexually active, as he fathered three children with his first wife and two more with his current wife, becoming the father of twins at age fifty-one. There have been rumors of Jordan being sexually active outside of his marriage, but there is no evidence of them being true. Based on the biographical narratives, it is impossible to demonstrate the occurrence of Symptom No. 8.

BINGE-COMPETING IN TURNS WITH ABSTINENCE PERIODS TO REGAIN HEALTH, TO DISPLAY “STRONG WILL” – Jordan retired from basketball three times and twice came back to actively playing in the NBA. Upon his first retirement in 1993 after winning three consecutive championships, he spoke in a press conference about being burnt out and lacking the motivation to continue playing. However, abstinence from competing was not in his plans as he intended to make his late father’s wish come true and try his hand at professional baseball. (Jason Culver, n.d.) In 1995, he returned to the Chicago Bulls and won three more consecutive titles in the years 1996-98. In January 1999, Jordan called for a “definitive” end to his career, saying:

My life will take a change, and a lot of people say “Well, Michael Jordan didn’t have any challenges away from the game of basketball.” Well, I dispute that. Being a parent is very challenging. If you have kids, you know that. And I welcome that challenge and I look forward to it. I will live vicariously through my kids if they play the game of basketball or if they don’t, I will support that. My wife and I will do the same. We will do what we can as parents and make sure that happens and that’s the challenge that I have in front of me and I look forward to that. (Chad Blanchard, n.d.)

Even when declaring that he would focus on his family, Jordan referred to this as a challenge.

Jordan lasted three years in his second retirement. In 2001, he traded his shares in the Washington Wizards, where he had been Basketball Operations Director, in exchange for a spot on the team. Jordan played for the Wizards until 2003, when he retired mid-season. Although he did not call a press conference that time, during a special farewell prepared for him by the NBA at the All-Star Game, he said, “I leave the game in good hands. [...] Now, I can go home and feel at peace with the game of basketball.” (zxc09800, n.d.)

9. **PROMISING ABSTINENCE** – Although it took Jordan three attempts to break away from being an active basketball player for good, he never made any promises that he would stay away from competing entirely. Moreover, in 2009, when he was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame at the age of forty-six, Jordan blustered that “Although I’m recognized with this tremendous honor of being in the Basketball Hall of Fame, I don’t look at this as a defining end of my relationship with the game of basketball. [...] One day, you might look up and see me playing the game at fifty... [audience laughs]... Oh, don’t laugh. Never say never.” (OfficialHoophall, n.d.)

10. **FEELINGS OF EMPTINESS AND HELPLESSNESS** – In *Michael Jordan: Air Time*, then thirty-year-old Jordan states, “If I have any problems away from the basketball court... when I play basketball, no matter how they’re playing, I got solution for that. So, it’s like my psychologist or whatever. If you ever take that away from me, I wouldn’t know what to do” (Winik, 1993). Jordan did manage to get his life together, although it took him some time. He returned to the NBA twice after two- and three-year intervals; at the age of forty, he retired for good; and in 2010, he became a majority owner of the Charlotte Hornets franchise. Thus, he never really broke away from the NBA. After all, in 1993 he said he could not imagine life without basketball.

IV. THE CHRONIC STAGE

AXIAL POINT – “LOSING CONTROL”

As mentioned previously, Jordan competed and won in streaks. Once he began a victory run, it seemed the only person who could stop him was himself. The period of Jordan’s life when the loss of control is most visible are the years 1991-93, at the end of which Jordan was burnt out and, in October 1993, he announced that he was leaving basketball. Obviously, his decision was influenced by the media frenzy over his alleged gambling problem and the

murder of his father in July that year. Aside from gambling, the period in question was marked by continuous competition and a series of wins described in detail under Symptom No. 1.

SYMPTOMS

1. LONG-LASTING STREAKS OF COMPETING AND WINNING – Jordan finished the 1990-91 season by winning the NBA championship, defeating his “eternal” enemies, the Detroit Pistons. In the Finals, he won against a team led by “Magic” Johnson, who was considered the greatest basketball player at that time. During the season, Jordan became the league’s scoring champion (for the fifth time in a row) and won the MVP⁵ titles for the regular season and the Finals. He spent the off-season playing golf (and probably gambling), and in the next season he repeated the feats of the previous one.

In 1991-92, Jordan won the scoring title once again and was again voted the MVP of the regular season. After embarrassing his main opponent, Clyde Drexler, who was considered by some to be as great as Jordan by, e.g., setting new Finals records in three-pointers made and points scored in one half of Game 1, Jordan was granted another Finals MVP title. The Bulls won the Finals and the second championship in a row, and during the regular season tied the NBA record for most games won in one season.

Jordan spent the summer of 1992 competing not only on golf courses. Together with the Dream Team,⁶ made up of the NBA’s best players and one college player, he won the Tournament of Americas in June/July, hence qualifying for the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. A month later, the Dream Team and Jordan beat all their rival teams in the Olympics, effortlessly winning the gold. Having won the Olympic laurels, Jordan began preparing for the next NBA season.

In the 1992-93 season, Jordan was not voted the league’s MVP, despite tying Wilt Chamberlain’s record of seven consecutive scoring titles. The award went to Jordan’s Dream Teammate, Charles Barkley, whom Jordan later defeated in the ‘93 Finals. In the championship series, Jordan set a record for the highest points per game average, which was one of the reasons he was voted the Finals MVP for the third straight time, and the Chicago Bulls won the third consecutive world championship.

2. COMPETING SINCE MORNING – Jordan would regularly appear for morning practices before other Bulls did, which earned him the reputation of the hardest-working player. He could also partake in competition from daybreak, especially when he felt the need to settle a score. An example of such behavior was his golf loss to Chuck Daly, the head coach of the Dream Team. Rick Reilly describes what happened afterwards as such:

One day in Monte Carlo last summer, where the Dream Team trained before the Barcelona Olympics, coach Chuck Daly beat Jordan by one shot on the golf course. “That’s it,” Daly said, meaning that he was quitting while he was ahead. “I’ll never play Michael again.” The next morning, at the crack of dawn, Jordan rang Daly’s room. Getting no response, he went directly to Daly’s room and knocked. Then he pounded. He wouldn’t go away until he got his rematch. (1993, p. 74)

3. COMPETING IN SOLITUDE – Jordan never competed in solitude simply because it is practically impossible to compete without opponents. However, he did hide from the public a particular form of competing – gambling – whether at a casino or on the golf course. Once the media publicized this aspect of Jordan’s life, his reaction resembled the mechanism of illusion and denial typical of addicts, which was pointed out by a knowledgeable lawyer:

Thank heavens that’s over. “As far as the subject of Michael Jordan,” NBA commissioner David Stern said last week, “that subject is closed.” Hallelujah. And pass the Moët-Chandon.

So why is Chuck Freiburger so worried? “Because it reminds me so much of what we went through in the early stages.” Freiburger says. “Exactly. The checks written for debts. The escalating amounts. The denial that there’s any problem.” What does Freiburger know? Not much, except that for years he was the lawyer for a confessed gambling addict—former Baltimore Colt quarterback Art Schlichter. (Reilly, 1993, p. 74)

4. LOWERED TOLERANCE TO A LEVEL OF SUCCESS – This symptom occurred when Jordan retired from basketball to play baseball. The largely failed attempt and the lack of tangible success were described in a 2010

⁵ Most Valuable Player award

⁶ Unofficial name of the 1992 US Basketball Olympic team.

documentary, *30 for 30: Jordan Rides the Bus*. As stated by Ron Shelton, the film's director, "[...] this era of Michael Jordan's career, which is often used to hang on great deal of criticism... I take the opposite out of. I think that this is a sign of his greatness that he could even dare do it, and try it, and accomplish anything at that level" (Shelton, 2010). Jordan treated the "baseball hangover" with returning to the NBA and winning three consecutive championships for the second time. The symptom of lowered tolerance was also visible when, in the years 2001-03, he played for the Washington Wizards. The team was too weak to qualify for the play-offs, not to mention a championship run, but it was satisfying enough for Jordan to be able to play at a professional level at the age of forty. He also claimed that his goal at that stage was not victory, but the opportunity to share his basketball knowledge and experience. Below is Jordan's statement from when he was announcing his return to the NBA in 2001:

"If I fall, I fall," Jordan, a can of Gatorade placed strategically by his side for the cameras, told reporters. "You get up and move on. If I try to teach my kids anything, it's to have a vision and try... If I do it, it's great. If I don't, I can live with myself."

There was a generation of young, athletic players eager to take advantage of him in his advancing years, he admitted. "My head is on a block," he said. "The young dogs are going to chase me around. Well, I'm not going to bark too far away from them either. I'm not running from nobody. If anything, it'll be a great challenge." Mostly, he wanted to avoid the sense of regret that had invaded his life since being forced to desert his game in Chicago. "There's an itch that still needs to be scratched here," he said. "And I want to make sure it doesn't bother me the rest of my life." (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 9761-9768)

In the TV commercial for the anniversary edition of Air Jordan XX basketball shoes released in 2005, Spike Lee, as the narrator of "A Tale of Jordan," cites Jordan's words: "I can accept failure, I can't accept not trying." (Getoutthebox1, n.d.)

5. TOXIC COMPETITION – The previously described examples of Jordan's aggressive "trash-talking" were especially toxic when they targeted his own teammates. Reilly provides an example of how Jordan treated Rodney McCray:

"He has practically ruined [reserve forward] Rodney McCray for us." When the two players are on opposite teams in scrimmages, the source says, "[Jordan] is in Rodney's face, screaming, "You're a loser! You've always been a loser!" Rodney can hardly put up a jumper now." (1993, p. 74)

Similarly, Halberstam reports on Jordan's relations with the Bulls' center, Bill Cartwright:

Jordan did not respect Cartwright as a man or as a player. He called him Medical Bill because of his past injuries. He thought Cartwright had bad hands, so sometimes in practice he threw him passes that were unnecessarily hard so that Cartwright would fumble them and prove Jordan's point. (Halberstam, 2012, p. 247)

Although Cartwright was normally known for his good-natured disposition, Jordan drove him to the point of making a verbal threat:

Michael is just... he's killing Bill Cartwright all the time in the locker room in front of everybody. Cartwright gets Michael aside and he says: "Look, if you ever do anything like that again, you will never play basketball because I'm gonna break both your legs." (Taylor, 2003)

Anyone who could not stand up to Jordan mentally became his victim.

6. BREAKUP OF FAMILY BONDS – Jordan's first marriage to Juanita Vanoy, which lasted seventeen years and endured long periods of the two being away from each other, Jordan's alleged affairs, and a separation in 2002, ended in 2006. Lazenby describes Jordan's divorce from his first wife in the following manner:

From there, Jordan settled in as an executive for the Bobcats, a period punctuated by his continued travels about the globe, golfing and gambling and partying. It seemed no great surprise that he soon faced divorce once again, after seventeen years of marriage to Juanita. The divorce was finalized in December 2006 and estimated by Forbes to have cost Jordan \$150 million, said to be one of the largest settlements in history. (Lazenby, 2014, loc. 10046-10049)

7. SELLING HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS, THEFTS (IN ORDER TO AFFORD THE COMPETITION) – The biographical narratives do not indicate that this symptom has occurred. During his basketball career as an active player, Jordan amassed a fortune of approximately five hundred million dollars, mainly through endorsement deals. As of February 2020, his net worth is estimated to be \$2.1 billion.⁷ There was no need for him to steal in order to finance any form of competition.
8. PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL DEGRADATION – The biographical narratives do not indicate that this symptom has occurred in the professional sphere, and Jordan’s short biography on the NBA’s official website still reads, “By acclamation, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time,”⁸ with the greatness being largely attributed to his unmatched will to win. However, in the social sphere, the 1993 revelations concerning his gambling practices considerably undermined his image as a role model for young people. During the 1993 play-offs, Knicks fans would come to Madison Square Garden holding banners reading “Be like Mike, bet on it!” which was a derisive parody of the Gatorade campaign slogan, “Be like Mike, drink Gatorade” (a product endorsed by Jordan). Nevertheless, this social scrutiny was temporary since, as Rick Reilly put it, “Still, let’s do what Stern and Rashad and Jordan all want us to do—forget about it. Subject closed and swept under the rug. None of our business anyway. Besides, Jordan is this nation’s most cherished athlete. What could happen to him?” (1993, p. 74).
9. TORPIDITY/“FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY” – The biographical narratives do not indicate that the symptom has occurred.
10. COMPETITION BECOMING THE ONLY GOAL IN LIFE – As mentioned above, Jordan himself admitted “To compete, to win... it’s all I live for, really” (Weitzman, 1999). His entire professional career, as well as episodes from his private life, serves as a confirmation of these words.
11. ILLNESSES AND PSYCHOSIS – The biographical narratives do not indicate that the symptom has occurred.
12. EXTREME PHYSICAL EXHAUSTION – The biographical narratives do not indicate that the symptom has occurred.
13. DEATH – The biographical narratives do not indicate that the symptom has occurred.

Conclusions

In 2020, Jordan continues to reap the benefits brought by his addiction to competition, and he seems to be in good physical and mental health. The financial empire he has created through his collaboration with Nike is growing. Apart from the Jordan Brand, the former basketball player gains profits from a majority ownership of the Charlotte Hornets and sales of the Cincoro tequila brand, in which he invested in 2019. Jordan’s private life also seems to be orderly: he remarried in 2013 and a year later became the father of twins; in 2019, he became a grandfather. All of the above do not imply that he managed to entirely overcome the need to compete. While Jordan has not suffered death in a physiological sense, his previous mental exhaustion and the loss of joy in competing made clear through his resignation from playing professional basketball in 1993 can be viewed symbolically as him losing the battle with his addiction. It can also be seen as an attempt to fight the addiction, and his returns to active playing in the NBA can be treated as relapses. Rather mild relapses of the addiction could be observed in Jordan’s behavior long after he parted ways with professional basketball. An example of such a recurrence is his Basketball Hall of Fame induction speech in 2009, which was widely criticized for lacking modesty. During his speech, he attempted to explain his uncompromising urge for competition by pointing to the igniters of the “competitive fire” (OfficialHoophall, n.d.) burning in him and the fuel which kept the fire burning. In other words, Jordan listed many of those who had gotten under his skin during his career and reminded the audience that he had dominated them all. While the speech could be perceived as a manner of settling with the past, Jordan still pitches into any opportunity

⁷ <https://www.forbes.com/profile/michael-jordan/#37f2b6042d83>

⁸ <https://www.nba.com/history/legends/profiles/michael-jordan>

to demonstrate his superiority or, at least, to provoke a rival. In 1996, Jordan and the Chicago Bulls, on their way to the championship title, set a record for most games won by a team in a regular season (72 wins and 10 losses). The record was broken in 2016 by the Golden State Warriors, who won 73 out of 82 games and yet failed to win the championship that season. In 2017, at an NBA team-owners meeting, Jordan took the opportunity to diss a new rival – the Golden State Warriors owner, Joe Lacob – by saying, “You know, 73 don’t mean shit [without the ring].”⁹ Jordan still projects the image of an alpha male who constantly feels the need to dominate.

As evidenced by this study, it is possible to perceive Michael Jordan as a “competition addict.” The question still remains as to whether Jordan overcame his addiction to competing. Is he actually operating in a framework that has allowed him to dwell in his addiction without suffering its destructive impact? Professional sports is an area where competition takes place daily and victories are rewarded. Despite the idea of “fair-play,” professional leagues, which officially condemn unethical behaviors, do tolerate such behaviors as long as they propel the business machine and the league is able to cover them up (e.g., doping or other forms of unfair play), as in the case of allegations against agents operating in the Major League of Baseball in 2018 (Schmidt & Waldstein, 2018). This is especially true for American culture, in which, as observed by Goldman, “The Sherman Anti-Trust Act, reflecting prevailing American social values, codified cultural beliefs about the inherent goodness of competition. Competition became an end in itself, a Darwinian regulator of industry as it was of nature, uncoupled from the social impact of the object of the competition. At the same time that competition was being enshrined by Congress and the Supreme Court as a sacred American value” (Goldman, 1993, p. 22). The philosophy of almost unrestrained competition makes the concept of “the end justifying the means” a part of the American Dream in American professional sports. Athletes such as Jordan, who live the dream, are presented as role models – people who overcame difficulties, including their own vices and imperfections, and achieved success.

The case study of Michael Jordan described in this article is not enough to treat competing and the need to win as a behavioral addiction on a massive scale. Nevertheless, the study opens the door for discussion and further studies on competitiveness as a form of behavioral addiction, as Jordan’s “competitive spirit” is not an isolated case. In the world of sports alone, it is possible to find individuals who can be assumed to be addicted to competing. One such individual was definitely Kobe Bryant, who died in a tragic accident in January 2020. Bryant patterned his basketball career on Jordan, and Jordan himself named Bryant as the only other person as competitive as him. However, there are others: Is not Lance Armstrong, who overcame cancer and won the Tour de France seven years in a row only to be exposed as having been doping, such an individual? What about Muhammad Ali, who lost his heavyweight champion belt three times and won it back twice, simultaneously challenging racism, intolerance, and the American government? Is Cristiano Ronaldo, who frequently cries on the pitch, a football actor or an individual who, on an emotional level, cannot accept failure? What about Bill Russel, Diego Maradona, Wladimir Klitschko, Tom Brady, Serena Williams, Pele, Michael Phelps, Tiger Woods, Roger Federer, or Lennox Lewis? Each one of these athletes dominated their sports. Some of them cheated (Maradona’s “Hand of God”). All of them achieved success by competing. Is it possible to accept that, as in Jordan’s case, in order to win multiple times one needs to be addicted to winning in some way? The question extends past the realm of sports and encourages an in-depth look at the biographies of figures who have operated in different fields and became famous for their competitiveness. Among such figures are Julius Cesar, Alexander the Great, Katherine the Great, John Rockefeller, Thomas Edison, and, from more contemporary times, Margaret Thatcher, Bill Gates, and Larry Ellison. None of those figures would have described themselves as being addicted, but rather ambitious, competitive, and determined. After all, history is written by winners.

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⁹ <https://www.foxsports.com/nba/story/michael-jordan-golden-state-warriors-73-wins-doesnt-mean-without-ring-meaningless-020817>

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