Original Research

Coaches' perspectives on sport-plus programmes for underserved youth: An exploratory study in South Africa

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Abstract

Increasing global awareness and a growing appreciation for sport for development programmes has led the post-apartheid South African government to use sport as a tool for empowering marginalized and impoverished communities. However, the sport for development programmes that have received the greatest governmental support and been evaluated by researchers have been "top-down" development projects, which have been criticised for a variety of reasons (e.g., not addressing actual community needs). This study was designed in response to this concern, with five focus groups conducted with 19 South African coaches. It was conducted in an effort to hear the voices of coaches operating at the ground level with sport for development programmes, leading to a better understanding of three key areas: (a) the realities of the sport setting, (b) the experiences of coaches and young people in these underserved communities, and (c) what approach to take when designing, implementing, and evaluating sport for development programmes. Practical implications for parents, coaches, and sport for development programme providers are also discussed, including the strategies used to keep children and youth involved in sport and coaches' recommendations for improvements in sport within underserved South African communities (e.g., joint top-down and inside-up programmes; specific improvements for coaching education programmes).

Background

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing awareness and appreciation of sport as a means for international development[1,2], with sport being incorporated into the universal development strategies of worldwide donors and development agencies[3] and scholars examining how sport could help achieve the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.[4] The continent that has received the greatest attention for delivering on these goals by 2015 has been Africa, where many populations are subjected to poverty, gender inequity, high morbidity and mortality rates, and low levels of literacy.[5] Given this attention, there have been an increasing number of sport for development (SfD) programmes in the continent.

Focusing on the country of South Africa, there has also been a distinct shift in the positioning of sport in the overarching societal and cultural norms. South Africa has one of the highest crime rates in the world,[6] low life expectancies, and unemployment rates as high as 75% in some communities.[7] Even though apartheid ended in 1994, there was, and still is, low social cohesion among the different racial groups, with higher rates of disease, crime, corruption, and social problems in makeshift settlements ("townships") built during apartheid for black individuals that are still populated and largely segregated today.[8] There are also many disadvantaged communities of coloured individuals in South Africa that are less "makeshift," but still disadvantaged, with sub-standard housing and amenities. With these complex problems in mind, the government began to believe that sport could serve as a developmental tool for the individuals residing in these underserved communities, leading to stronger communities with healthier social, political, and economic environments.[9,10]

At the national level, the South African government supported a series of initiatives under the Australia-South Africa Development Programme, which focused on sport participation and the development of sport skills for young South Africans.[11,12] Additionally, there has been a call for mass participation programmes by Sport and Recreation South Africa, with a focus on building communities through active and structured participation in sport and recreation programmes.[13] Each of these national initiatives have been evaluated by outsider researchers, with Burnett and colleagues finding evidence of social change in terms of empowerment, equity, and access to participation and decision-making opportunities, resulting in enhanced social capital at the individual and community level.[11, 12,14]

Although these programmes are to be commended, along with the strong research conducted by Burnett and colleagues, they are "top-down" development projects designed, funded, and implemented by national and international governing bodies. The top-down approach is one of three developmental approaches identified by Mintzberg,[15] along with the outside-in globalization approach and the inside-up indigenous approach. Over time, researchers have begun to question this top-down government planning approach, with multiple concerns: (a) the power and politics in the sport and development relationship;[16,17] (b) whether community needs are even addressed by top-down programmes;[18] (c) the possibility that top-down programmes can be used for social control and regulation;[19,20] and (d) the potential that top-down programmes will not be welcome in the target communities.[15] In relation to this last point, Burnett[21] acknowledged that the School Sport Mass Participation Programme never achieved real buy-in from the communities, resulting in a backlash to this government-sponsored programme. These four concerns highlight the need to better understand inside-up approaches with widespread community involvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of sport for development programmes.

Along with this call for more research focused on inside-up, grassroots programming throughout the world, there has also been a call for research methods addressing alternative knowledges or voices, with a strong concern that the majority of research efforts have focused on programmers from the "top" or the "outside" who are implementing these SfD programmes.[22-24] There is also the concern that researchers have tried to evaluate SfD programmes using standard, quantitative evaluation methods, which may not be suitable for obtaining an in-depth understanding of these programmes and the individuals' experiences on the

ground[25] While this type of research is necessary, it is also critical for researchers to explore what Coakley[26(p122)] described as the "variations in sport experiences and how people from different social and cultural backgrounds give those experiences meaning and integrate them into their lives at various points in their life course." Coakley[27] elaborated on this concern in 2011 with an exploration of how global SfD organisations operating in underserved communities tend to prioritize developmental outcomes that are desired by the sponsoring organisations and their staff members. Coakley criticised this approach, instead recommending the promotion of developmental outcomes desired by the people being served, who are from different social and cultural backgrounds and may therefore value different forms of personal development. This highlights the need to give a voice to those individuals who are involved in local, inside-up programming efforts around the world.

This South African study was designed to hear the voices of coaches operating at the ground level, leading to a better understanding of three key areas: (a) the realities of the sport setting, (b) the experiences of coaches and young people in these underserved communities, and (c) what approach to take when designing, implementing, and evaluating SfD programmes. These objectives were achieved by conducting focus groups with sport coaches with considerable experience providing sport programming for children and youth in underserved communities in South Africa, predominantly in the Western Cape region. One of the strengths of this research was the fact that coaches from a variety of sport-plus programmes served as the research participants. Sport-plus programmes are predominantly focused on developing and sustaining sport organizations in order to meet sport-specific objectives, while also using sport to address larger social issues.[28] This addresses yet another limitation of past research studies,[29] which have been narrowly focused on individual SfD programmes or on particular SfD organisations, instead of examining a broad selection of programmes and organisations from one country. This research study was designed to take a broad focus, with coaches from many different sport-plus programmes participating in focus groups.

Methods

This study used a phenomenological methodology, with semi-structured focus groups enabling the participants' perceptions and meanings to be collected and analyzed.[30] A constructivist ontology framed the study, with the understanding that different versions of reality are constructed by individuals, while an interpretivist

epistemology guided the research, with the belief that only indirect indications of the phenomena under study can be obtained.[31,32]

Participants

Following ethical clearance from an American university and a South African university, five focus group interviews were conducted. Selected participants were required to be South African citizens who were at least 18 years old with the ability to speak and understand conversational English. Additionally, the participants had to have experience coaching underserved South African children and/or youth for a minimum of two years. Using these criteria for inclusion, the final sample consisted of 19 participants split into the five focus groups. See Table 1 for the sample characteristics.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Sample Characteristics	Participants
Number of subjects, N (%)	19 (100)
Age, y (mean +/- SD)	40.94 +/- 9.61
Race/Ethnicity, N (%)	
Black	6 (31.58)
Coloured	10 (52.63)
White	3 (15.79)
Native Language, N (%)	
Africaans	13 (68.42)
Xhosa	6 (31.58)
Highest Education, N (%)	
Grade 10	1 (5.26)
Grade 12	1 (5.26)
University	4 (21.05)
Higher Education	7 (36.84)
National Diploma or Advanced Certificate	5 (26.32)
No response	1 (5.26)
Coaching Experience, y (mean +/- SD)	16.16 +/- 8.95
Sports Coached, N (%)	
Soccer	6
Netball	6
Rugby	5
Athletics	6
Cricket	3
Gymnastics	2
Field Hockey	2
Handball	2
Volleyball	1
Aerobics	1
Golf	1

Procedures

Greenbaum[33] has suggested that focus groups are appropriate when researchers are interested in generating new ideas from a variety of perspectives. Given the exploratory nature of the study, focus group interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection tool. The participants were recruited through a combination of snowball and purposive sampling techniques to ensure a representative sample. Specifically, a local South African university professor who understood the purpose of this study helped the interviewer make initial contact with some coaches and other individuals who may be able to recommend potential participants. In turn, these individuals provided the interviewer with additional coaches to contact. Each focus group was scheduled at the convenience of the participants, so that groups of coaches were able to assemble. Incentives were not offered as a means to recruit participants, with the coaches taking part in the study under their own volition. One of the authors conducted all of the focus group interviews following the suggestion by Krueger and Casey[34] that the same researcher serve as the moderator due to her involvement with the development of the interview guide, knowledge of the research topic, and ability to probe with follow-up questions. Prior to the start of each focus group, the participants were informed of the purposes of the study, the confidentiality of their comments, and their rights as research participants. They then signed an informed consent form and completed a basic demographics questionnaire.

Interview Guide

In line with the guidelines set by Kvale,[35] a semi-structured format was used for the focus groups. There was a specific set of questions that were posed in all of the focus groups, but the interviewer was free to explore any unexpected issues and topics that arose in each focus group. The interview guide was developed from a combination of factors, including previous literature on coaching,[36,37] positive youth development,[38,39] and life skills development.[40-42] Additionally, a review of focus group literature was used in the development of the interview guide.[33-35] An expert knowledgeable in these fields and in qualitative research reviewed the interview guide to ensure the questions were appropriate, understandable, and likely to encourage discussion. Finally, the guide was evaluated by a local South African university professor to minimize cross-cultural misunderstanding.

The focus groups lasted for an average of 71 minutes.

After a brief introduction from each participant and a few ice-breaking questions to create a welcoming environment, the interviewer began asking questions from the interview guide.

Sample questions included: (1) "Why do your players participate in sport?" (2) "What are your goals for your players?" and (3) "What are some of the major issues that you face with your players today?" The major components of the focus group interview results that constitute the focus of this manuscript are player participation and coaches' goals, experiences, and strategies.

Data Analysis

Since the purpose of the study was exploratory in nature, the analysis procedures centered on seeking patterns rather than creating and/or testing theories.[43] Audio-recordings of the five focus groups were transcribed verbatim. Two members of the research team, including the interviewer, independently performed a comprehensive inductive content analysis using constant comparison and critical reflection to guide the analysis procedures, beginning with openly coding the raw meaning units and then more focused coding through the creation and organization of lower order themes and higher order themes.[44] At each level of analysis, the two researchers followed an iterative consensus validation process, and when differences arose between the researchers, the transcripts were re-read and discussed until consensus was reached.[45] Additionally, a peer debrief was conducted with a third investigator throughout the analysis procedures and in the final stage of analysis. Overall, the issues of trustworthiness and validity were ensured through the use of multiple coders, the process of iterative consensus validation, and the inclusion of a peer reviewer throughout the analysis procedures.[43,46]

Results and Specific Discussion

Overall, the inductive content analysis yielded 334 raw meaning units, which coalesced into 120 lower order themes. These lower order themes were then organized into 44 higher order themes, all of which were under five general dimensions: (1) coaches' goals for players, (2) reasons for sport participation, (3) barriers to sport participation, (4) strategies used by coaches to keep underserved children and youth involved in sport, and (5) recommendations for improvements in sport. These general dimensions are presented in the following section, along with an in-depth review of select higher order themes. A list of these higher order themes in the first three general dimensions can be found in Figure 1.

Coaches' Goals for Players

In each focus group, the coaches discussed their personal goals they held for the children and youth whom they coached. This topic was critical to the study's purpose, as one cannot fully understand the experiences of children and youth in these sport-plus programmes without exploring the coaches' goals for their players, something often assumed but seldom asked when top-down approaches are adopted. Furthermore, the value of identifying coaches' goals is demonstrated by the research findings of Smoll and Smith,[47] who reported that coaches' goal priorities significantly influenced the young athletes whom they were coaching.

Holistic Development of Players

When asked to share their goals for their players, the coaches talked the most about their interest in developing their players holistically. While they wanted to help their players reach their potential in sport, the coaches understood that very few players make it to the professional level, so they felt it was critical for them to develop the "whole person," and not just the "athlete." As one coach from Focus Group Two (FG2) explained:

I think obviously we want to improve the players' performance. I think that's first and foremost. But I believe that sport is also a means to develop a person, to empower the person…to have the person learning to help themselves, learning some life skills.

Another coach described how he's "always felt very strongly about holistic development. They've [the players] got to achieve in athletics, but they've got to achieve in other areas as well." They were also concerned with the players transferring the life skills that they learned within the sport environment to academics, with several coaches highlighting this topic. This is an interesting finding in light of Coakley's[27] recent suggestion that often those in sport buy into the sport evangelist myth that participation leads to psychosocial development without the need to intentionally foster such growth. Some of these coaches were aware of the inaccuracy of this myth, while others subscribed to this myth wholeheartedly – believing that sport participation was automatically leading to psychosocial development through sport and the transference of life and academic skills from the sport domain into the classroom and other areas of life. This misconception suggests that programmes and organisations need to provide coaching classes,

Figure 1. General Dimensions and Higher Order Themes

Coaches' Goals for Players

- Remove Limitations and Expose to Better Life (4, 13)*   - Holistic Development of Players (4, 12)
- Find Balance Between Education and Sport (4, 10)   - Take Control of Their Lives and Their Future (3, 10)
- Avoid Challenges of Underserved Communities (3, 11)   - See Sport as Tool for a Better Life (3, 10)
- Process-Oriented Improvement in Sport (3, 7)   - Be Successful (3, 4)
- Be Active and Participate in Many Sports (3, 3)   - Have Fun (2, 3)
- Be Successful in Sport (2, 2)   - Motivate (2, 2)
- Enhanced Feelings of Competence (1, 6)   - Learn How to Prepare in Sport (1, 3)
- Break Down Beliefs in Racial Barriers in Sport (1, 2)

Reasons for Sport Participation

- Pursue New Opportunities (3, 14)   - Fun (3, 13)
- Extrinsic Rewards (4, 6)   - Social Interaction (3, 8)
- Follow Path Set by Others (2, 4)   - Avoid Negatives (2, 4)
- Sense of Belonging (2, 3)   - Being Outdoors and Active (1, 5)
- Compete / Achieve (1, 4)   - Easy to Play the Game (1, 3)
- Life Balance Between Education and Sport (1, 1)

Barriers to Sport Participation

- Issues with Resources (5, 53)   - Insufficient Support from Family / Community (4, 19)
- Insufficient Infrastructure for Sport Development (4, 6)   - Insufficient Support from Institutions (2, 13)
- Race / Class Perceptions for Certain Sports (2, 6)   - Lack of Skilled Coaches and Role Models (1, 3)
- Challenges for Females (2, 2)   - Life Balance Between Education and Sport (1, 1)
- Successful Sport Career Not Guaranteed Nor Path Fully Understood (2, 7)
- Challenges Associated with Underserved Communities (1, 5)

* The first number in the parentheses signifies the total number of focus groups in which this higher order theme was mentioned, while the second number stands for the number of raw meaning units for each theme.

mentors, and/or comprehensive education programmes that emphasize the requisite intentionality in facilitating psychosocial development through sport.[48]

These efforts may help dispel the simplistic sport evangelist myth by ensuring that coaches have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to purposefully foster the psychosocial development of their athletes.

Removing Limitations and Working Towards a Better Life

Continuing with the theme of working towards a better life, the coaches discussed how many of their players did not have dreams of their own, which reflects the "live for the moment" mentality that often occurs with individuals living in poverty.[49] With this understanding, the coaches wanted their players to look beyond the present moment and begin to dream about and plan for their future. The coaches wanted to help their players believe in the possibility of having a better life, and they emphasized how important it was for their players to have a dream and then work towards that dream. A coach in FG4 described this hope in this way:

One thing that I want the kids to have is to have a dream. Because once you have a vision of what you want to see, and the person that I want to be when I get old, and the person that I am…the same thing for them to dream about, what is it that they want in 5, 10 years' time? And then, whatever goes in between that period of time, 20 or 21, then they must work or build that life.

The coaches believed that sports could help empower their players to take control of their lives and choose their future paths. This focus on the future has been found in other studies as well, with Burnett[11] finding that individuals in an impoverished South African community felt that sport could help young people become more employable. In order to effectively prepare their players for future employment, current and future familial roles, and other lifestyle factors, coaches must understand how to effectively support and promote the personal development of their players. This highlights the importance of coaching education programmes that will prepare these coaches to intentionally and consistently foster their players' personal development. It also suggests that coaches must become involved in the larger community, so that they can access

other needed resources and/or help their athletes to take advantage of any social capital that exists.

The coaches also talked extensively about their interest in exposing their players to a variety of opportunities, such as meeting other people, seeing other places, and having a variety of new experiences, since many of the young players are often so isolated in their communities. As one coach noted:

Through sport, they [the players] get an opportunity to widen their horizons. I can say that because lots of my kids…for weeks and for months, they stay in one place. Through sport, they can get out at least once or twice a month, and they can see other people, other places.

Another coach shared how sport could help the players "meet other people…see other places." This focus on using sport for upward social mobility has been reported in other studies as well,[14] suggesting that this is a common goal that coaches have for their players. For example, upward social mobility was addressed in Burnett's[14] research as part of the educational value of sport, such as the development of social and leadership skills through sport participation enabling youth to move away from a state of hopelessness and poverty. For these young players, it is possible that these new sport participation experiences could lead them from a state of intransitive thought, which is Friere's[50] notion that people do not think critically about their social condition in the underserved communities, to a state of naïve transitivity, where the players may begin to perceive and respond to comments and questions about their context. The players may even progress to the final stage of critical transitivity, where they would be aware of their reality and the social conditions that construct this reality, and they may begin to consider how they may take critical action to transform this reality. When individuals reach this final stage, they have developed a critical consciousness, which is often the first step towards creating change in their own lives or even mobilizing a group of people to create change within the community.

Avoid Challenges of Underserved Communities

The coaches also felt that sport could help these children and youth stay busy, thereby avoiding the bad things that were happening in their communities. According to one coach in FG3, "We try to keep our kids busy with sport, because there is so much other things going on in our communities, like drug abuse, alcohol abuse." Another coach acknowledged that "to play sport is to get kids away

from all the bad stuff." Similarly, Burnett[14] and Waardenburg[51] found that coaches and teachers believed that sport could be used as a means to keep their players busy, and thus avoid any negative activities or friends in the community. This focus on sport simply keeping youth busy suggests that even if coaches are not using sport as a tool for development, there are still positive implications of the sport experience; in this case, players are kept safe and occupied through sport, thereby limiting the opportunities youth have to engage in negative behaviors. It can be easy for scholars to criticize sport programmes for not maximizing the benefits of the sport experience, but if the basic needs of a player are not met (e.g., safety, food, water, shelter), then it may not be possible for youth to learn the sport and life skills that are being taught.

In the present study, the coaches also believed that sport could help the participants forget about the hardships in their own lives. One of the coaches in FG1 described the following scene:

You have the small room [that is your home] and everybody's in that room, mother and father are fighting because father is drunk. And you [the young person] sit in a corner where you cannot study. There's no light. But out there [on the field], you make something. You forget yourself. You forget the hardship. You with other children. Nobody looks down on you. Nothing. And you can do your thing and you can do it nicely.

This quote highlights how the coaches truly believed that sport participation can provide their players with an opportunity to forget about their own lives for a short period of time and focus on something else that is more enjoyable. It is important, however, that coaches like these realize that providing periods of enjoyment and keeping young people out of harm's way are not enough; these coaches need to help their players develop the skills and attitudes needed to make good choices, develop alternative life pathways, and learn to negotiate the many challenges they face in their communities.[27,52,53] In addition, coaches may need to become politically active to help elicit changes in the power inequities that create the conditions in which these young people live in the first place.[27]

Breaking Down Racial Barriers

The coaches acknowledged that sport has played a big role in breaking down apartheid, with one coach explaining this in more depth:

A lot of progress has been made. Let's be honest about that. Of course a lot still needs to be done, but I see sports also as a vehicle to improving relationships and breaking down the barriers. And it is doing it. I mean, it's wonderful to see sometimes they are out at, at the younger age, the children don't think in terms of race when they play together.

The coaches then shared their hope for the power of sport to help the country in the future, especially the racial divisions and perceptions from the past that still exist in South Africa today. In the words of one coach, "We're breaking it down, but like anything, it takes time… Like anything else, like apartheid, all those things. It takes time. You can't just change it, [snaps fingers] like that." Another black coach explained how she was hopeful that the sport of gymnastics was changing some of her gymnasts' perceptions of racial barriers. Before introducing the sport in her community, gymnastics used to be perceived as "a sport, in our minds, that is for whites." But after getting youth involved in gymnastics, she was hopeful that this perception was changing, with the young people realizing that "gymnastics, it's not for whites. It's for everyone who can do it." In fact, researchers have found that sport can contribute to the facilitation of social inclusion within ethnically diverse populations,[56,57] such as that which exists in South Africa. However, it is not an easy process, as another coach acknowledged that there was some frustration with the racial divisions and perceptions that still exist, explaining that, "Sometimes, we think it's too slow in some instances and some areas. It take a long time to get there. Obviously, then the people get frustrated. Even the players, they get frustrated." Coaches must be cautioned not to see sport as some sort of panacea for facilitating social, cultural, and political change related to racial divisions and perceptions. When not carefully positioned and thoughtfully cultivated, SfD programmes have been shown to reproduce social inequalities and can create and/or deepen racial and gender divisions, political injustice, and the dominance of one group over another.[48]

Reasons for Sport Participation

Moving away from the coaches' goals for their players, there was also a discussion centered on why the youth from these underserved South African communities may be interested in playing sports. This topic was deemed to be critical because there is a distinct need for parents, coaches, and programme providers to understand why youth are interested in participating in sports; similarly, it is important for larger public and private governing bodies, organisations, and institutions to have this information from those operating on the ground level. This information will hopefully allow the programmes targeting these individuals to tailor the programme designs to match their interests, as there has been a history of top-down programmes created in the past without a full understanding of why the young people may be interested in participating.[18] This reflects the lack of community involvement in top-down programmes as well as the assumption that youth from different social and cultural backgrounds participate in sport for the same reasons as those in Western societies. Unfortunately, despite good intentions, this often results in ineffective programmes that are not highly attended and are not serving the targeted populations, especially when compared with inside-up programmes that have widespread community involvement and investment.

Pursue New Opportunities

The most frequently cited reason for sport participation revolved around the young players pursuing new opportunities in their lives. This mirrors the coaches' own goals for their players to have new experiences that will open up their minds and help them dream about and plan for their futures. The coaches discussed how their players were interested in having experiences outside of the community, allowing them to see new places and meet new people. In the words of one coach from FG5, "Most of them [the players] just do sport to get out of the community." The coaches also talked about how their players were interested in participating in a variety of sports, regardless of the type of sport.

Fun and Amusement

Time and again, the coaches discussed how their players were drawn to sports because of their interest in having fun. The coaches felt that their players were often motivated to play because of their enjoyment when playing the sport and their love for the game. This finding suggests that enjoyment and fun may be universal reasons for children and youth sport participation, as a study commissioned by the United States Anti-Doping Agency[58] found that young people cite fun as their primary reason for sport participation. In the current study, one coach explained that, "kids basically play the game because they love the game." This matches the findings of Waardenburg,[51] who reported that the young players were interested in sport serving as a form of amusement.

Social Interaction and Sense of Belonging

The coaches discussed their players' yearning for social interaction with their friends and teammates, as well as the need for belonging to a larger group. In the words of a coach from FG3, "For kids to be involved in sport, it gives them that feeling that they belong somewhere." In fact, some of the coaches believed that many of these young people wanted to develop a family within their sport environment, since so many of them did not have a healthy family environment at home. As one coach in FG4 explained, "Sport was the real family."

While it may seem as if this interest in building friendships and being part of a team is trivial, this can actually be linked to the concept of social capital, which can be defined as advantages that are gained through social connectivity.[59] Within the context of these underserved communities, it is possible for this connectivity to allow young people to develop social and emotional skills that will be helpful later in life, build a network of individuals who will support one another, and become more active in social life in the community.[60] In fact, research has shown that networks within marginalized communities based on mutual trust, shared values, and reciprocal ubuntu (sharing what one has) result in the development of intra-group cohesion, inter-group cooperation, and multi-group collaboration within the community.[11,61,62] This can result in a "protective effect" of social capital, where young people care for their friends and teammates,[63] which can be critical in the underserved South African communities where it can be extremely unsafe to walk alone, especially for females.[64] Additionally, enhanced social capital can also result in a decline in delinquency among underserved youth.[65,66] Narrowing in on previous research on sport for development programmes in South Africa, several studies have found that social capital is one of the most significant products of these programmes,[11,51] which matches the present research findings.

Barriers to Sport Participation

Barriers that are preventing players from participating in sport or even causing them to discontinue their sport participation is another topic that is critical for program providers to understand. Top-down programmes often assume that these barriers are similar to those experienced in sport for development programmes in Western societies, leading to insufficient programme designs and implementation. For this reason, it is critical for those in SfD to understand the specific barriers for the underserved children and youth they may serve in each community, so

that these barriers can be circumvented when possible. Therefore, this topic was addressed in each focus group, so that the coaches at the ground level participating in inside-up sport-plus programmes could provide a detailed description of these barriers and how they impacted sport participation. The coaches were also asked to identify their strategies for circumventing these barriers and recommendations for improvements in these communities. These practical implications are included in the following subsections.

Issues with Resources

The most significant issue that was cited by the coaches in all of the focus groups was the overall lack of resources, including a lack of facilities, equipment, funding, and transportation. This overwhelming lack of resources is not surprising, given that poverty represents a process where vulnerable populations, such as the coaches and athletes in these communities, do not have access to the resources that are needed.[14,67] In fact, previous researchers in South Africa have found similar issues with a lack of physical resources.[68] In particular, the coaches in this study discussed how the schools and communities rarely provide the facilities that are required for sport participation. As one of the coaches in FG1 explained, "The stupid government builds a new school…and they don't build a school hall, so they have no place indoors to do anything. So they [the sport teams] have to be in the passage ways, in front of classrooms."

Another significant issue with resources was the concern about funding, with one coach acknowledging that "we haven't got that much money to do all of those things." More specifically, the coaches in FG2 discussed how money is often available for certain sports (e.g., rugby) but not for other sports (e.g., soccer). The coaches also identified the need for feasible transportation options for the players to and from their practice and competition locations, which are often outside of the communities, due to the lack of facilities inside of the communities. According to one coach in FG3, "Our schools haven't got school buses where they drop kids from point A to point B." This has proven to be a significant barrier for many of the players, as they cannot afford to pay for transportation to and from some of the practice and competition locations. These concerns surrounding resources in this and other studies suggest that there may be a need for practitioners to either become educated about fundraising and fund development (e.g., grant writing, marketing strategies, community outreach) or

hire qualified individuals to take on this critical role. It might also be important for practitioners to learn how to become more politically engaged to move local governments to do more to respond to community needs.

Insufficient Familial Support

Another barrier to sport participation that was identified in all of the focus groups was the lack of parental support, with some players possessing "all the potential, but they don't have the support." This has been found in the literature as well, with Burnett[14] reporting how the young participants from the underserved communities of the Eastern Cape and the Northern Province did not have the care and support that was needed for optimal development. Additionally, Waardenburg[51] found that parents rarely attended the sporting events of their children. In the present study, the coaches described how white parents with more resources often provide this support by watching their children participate in sport and providing transportation and funding for their sport involvement. In contrast, in the underserved communities, the parents often work so hard to make ends meet that they do not know their children are even participating in sport, and even if they are aware of their children's participation, they are still unable to attend any of the competitions or give their children money for their sport participation. According to a coach in FG2, "It is a family struggle to get food onto the table…sometimes you'll take a child to go and play, and these parents don't even know, 'cause they don't have the means to come there." One coach in FG1 explained how the "parents are not there, even if they are not working…and when there's a competition, you ask [the] mother, 'can you come and see and watch?' They're not interested." This highlights how some of the parents just do not understand why their children want to participate in sport. In fact, for females, many parents are scared that their girls are in danger because of the crime that exists on or near the sports fields. "They [the parents] don't understand why a little girl must go to the sports field and spend the time, all day, because it's dangerous and the crime that is there outside and everything." Despite this resistance, the coaches stressed the importance of involving the parents in a meaningful way, so they have a better understanding of the sport environment and the potential for sport to help their children. One strategy used by a coach in FG4 was organizing "committees that are in conversation with the parents, so that the parents can also be involved directly and then they can understand what this thing [sport] is really all about."

Another challenge is that parents do not have extra money

for the costs associated with sport participation. According to one coach in FG4, "There's always a struggle when it comes to generating money for transport and playing kits and equipment." This confirms previous research by Botsis et al,[69] who found that parents or guardians from underserved communities are often unable to pay for the added cost of sport participation for their children. This lack of parental support often requires the coaches to become the main providers of transportation, equipment, and support for their players, which can be difficult for them. The coaches truly believed that if the level of parental support could be improved, there would be a discernible impact on the number of children and youth becoming involved in sports, staying involved, and participating more frequently. The findings from this study and others highlight a need for SfD researchers to investigate how parents prioritize their discretionary income (if any) and what methods are effective in changing parents' spending habits with discretionary income. Additionally, it could be beneficial for SfD practitioners to examine alternative means of payment for transportation, kits, and equipment, such as a barter system (e.g., exchanging baked goods for soccer cleats) or a time share (e.g., exchanging an hour of tutoring or housework by the parent for an hour of transportation by the bus driver). These methods of trade that reflect the spirit of ubuntu have been found to be utilized in African communities that lack resources[11] and could prove to be beneficial in providing these much needed services and sport equipment.

Insufficient Infrastructure to Support Sport Development

Many of the coaches also discussed their concerns with the infrastructure for sport in underserved communities throughout South Africa. This was largely based on their belief that there were not many sport options for young people in these communities, resulting in some youth choosing not to participate in the sports that were available. Some of the coaches voiced their belief that this issue was related to race, as there is an abundance of sport options for youth in white communities, while there are minimal sport options in coloured and black communities. The coaches also highlighted the fact that their players have even fewer sport options when they transition from primary school to secondary school, as this is when soccer begins to dominate as a sport choice, and rugby, cricket, and/or hockey are sometimes not offered, along with a number of other sports. As one coloured coach from FG5 described:

We as a [primary] school, we try to introduce so many sports to all the kids. But when they grow bigger, go to high

...school, and probably afterwards, then the sport coach decreases. Like, for instance, in this community, we only get soccer...'cause soccer is the most popular sport in our coloured...community. But if you look at the white community, there's so many other sports.

Race and Class Perceptions

Another barrier that was a key topic of conversation in some of the focus groups was the fact that there are race and class perceptions for certain sports. One coach explained this perception in the following way:

Traditionally, rugby was always seen as a white man's sport. I must use the racial term. It was a...white man's sport in the old apartheid era. And that was a way they showed their superiority. By beating opposition. And soccer was always seen as a black sport. That's unfortunate, but that's the truth.

Additionally, some of the coaches in the focus groups perceived a resistance to change in the overall structure of sport in South Africa, especially concerning the development of soccer in the schools and throughout South Africa. Long et al[70] have suggested that there are many forms of exclusion in sports that persist each and every day in these communities. Specifically, the coaches believed that rugby receives more funding, leading to more equipment and more opportunities for those participating in that sport. The coaches felt that this was due to three main factors: (1) there are fewer children interested in playing rugby, resulting in more money and opportunities to go around; (2) there isn't much equipment needed for soccer; and (3) rugby has historically been a white person's sport. The coaches believed that soccer is finally receiving more attention and funding due to the fact that South Africa hosted the soccer World Cup in 2010, despite the uphill battle to get the sport in the schools and communities. However, the coaches believed that without the 2010 World Cup, this change in attention and funding would not have happened this soon, or perhaps even at all.

Challenges Associated with Underserved Communities

Other barriers that coaches believed often prevent youth from underserved communities from getting involved in sport were based on the realities of living in underserved communities in South Africa. For example, the coaches in FG2 felt that hunger and drugs were issues that the players from underserved communities had to face, while those from more privileged backgrounds did not have these same concerns. One coach described how coaches had to "compete with all these drugs" when trying to get young people from underserved communities to participate in sports. The coaches also discussed how many of the youth in underserved South African communities had to act like adults, even when they were very young. "They have to act like adults. They don't have the adults. They get confronted with a lot of things that they have to deal with, but they are still children." The responsibilities placed on these young people often become barriers to sport participation, especially for females. For example, many females "are expected to cook and to clean the house," which often prevents them from participating in sports. A previous study also showed that girls and boys from a South African township often had responsibilities at home, such as caring for their younger siblings, which prevent them from playing sports as often as they would like.[51] These findings about the implications of living in underserved communities in South Africa match Coakley's[26,27] belief that sport experiences vary based on individuals' social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. This leads back to the importance of inside-up programming efforts where community members are involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of sport for development programmes.

The coaches strongly believed that the top-down government programmes in their communities did not consider the specific context of each individual community, which resulted in ineffective programmes that were not supported by the community. As one coach described:

They [the government] don't do research. And they will even come and give me instructions about what I'm supposed to do, while I know the need, but I must follow them, because they are my bosses. They say I must do this, even though I know it's not relevant.

Instead of taking a solely top-down approach, the coaches advocated for a combined approach that incorporates both inside-up and top-down variables. By including the government in the programming efforts, the coaches felt that the programmes were more likely to be long-term in nature and more capable of securing funding. With community members involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the SfD programmes, these programmes were also more likely to address community needs and receive public support. However, the coaches in this study, similar to coaches operating in underserved communities around the world, often are not well versed in the politics of how to implement community change and become involved in and successfully negotiate

government and community partnerships. This is a valuable set of skills that coaching educators should consider addressing in sport for development coaching education programmes in the future.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that must be acknowledged. First, by utilizing a focus group methodology, it is possible that the participants may have felt uncomfortable in sharing their experiences in front of a larger group, although the interviewer tried to minimize any discomfort by fostering a welcoming and safe environment throughout the entire focus group interview; from her perspective, the coaches felt comfortable in the focus group setting and were not afraid to speak up. Additionally, the varied compositions of the focus groups, both in gender and ethnicity, could have had an effect on the climate and tone of the discussions. There is also the possibility that the participants could have reacted negatively or positively to the interviewer's skin color, gender, or nationality, which would impact the discussions within the focus group interviews. Another limitation centered on the requirement for the participants to speak and understand conversational English, which likely influenced the composition of the focus groups. Finally, the players' reasons for and barriers to sport participation were identified by the coaches, since the players were not directly involved in this study. While it was clear that the coaches were very close with their players and knowledgeable about these topics, the study would have been stronger with direct participation from the players. In future studies, it would be helpful for the players to be involved, so as to address this limitation.

Conclusion

The present study was designed to fill a gap in sport for development research within South Africa by hearing the voices of coaches at the grassroots level who are working in a variety of programmes and organisations largely in the Western Cape region of South Africa. This inside-up approach led to an in-depth understanding of local sport-plus programmes and the coaches' experiences on the ground. This also resulted in an exploration of alternative knowledges and voices about various South African economic, social, cultural, and political issues as related to the coaches' and players' sport experiences, which was highlighted as an area requiring further investigation.[19-21] Additionally, these research findings provide a better understanding of how SfD programmes can be designed to address local community needs and concerns, with the coaches recommending a joint top-down developmental approach and inside-up indigenous approach for local programming efforts.

When considering all of the findings from this study, it becomes clear that there is a major concern for helping young people in these underserved South African communities find their purpose in life. The coaches were convinced that sport was an excellent tool for empowering these young people to take control of their lives, with sport being used for upward mobility both within and outside of the communities. Similarly, the coaches shared how their players were also using sport as a developmental tool for their personal and professional lives, such as preparing for future employment, connecting with their peers, and working towards a university scholarship. While this recognition of the potential of sport for development in these players' lives is very exciting, there are still a number of barriers that often lead these young people to discontinuing their sport participation or simply prevent sport participation at the outset. This includes the lack of resources within these communities, the pervasive racial perceptions that are tied to a number of sports, and the debilitating lack of support from a variety of sources, including: parents, peers, schools, community members, and the local, provincial, and national government. Despite these barriers, the coaches were strong in their belief that sport is having a positive impact on many of the young athletes in their sport-plus programmes, and the coaches were hopeful that sport would continue to be the focus of the South African government for developmental progress within underserved communities. As with any successful sport-plus programme, the use of evaluation in determining the effectiveness of programme implementation is imperative in order to maximize the positive impact on the youth, coaches, and communities involved as well as the fundraising potential for these programmes. It is also critical for coaches and programmer providers to become more politically astute and work closely with community leaders to better inform governments of the importance of these programmes and the need for more resources to support them.

Additional Information: Tables of the results of all analyses are available upon request from the first author.

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