

INSPIREE: INDONESIAN SPORT INNOVATION REVIEW



ISSN 2746-6965 (Online), 2774-2520 (Print)

Journal Homepage: <https://inspiree.review/index.php/inspiree>

Original Research Articles

OPEN ACCESS

Psychological Well-Being of Sports Managers: Differences Between Experienced and Future Managers and the Influence of Gender, Age, and Family Status

<https://doi.org/10.53905/inspiree.v7i02.177>

Radu Predoiu^{1ac}, Luca Mihai Grozav^{2abc}, Gabriela Szabo^{3bd}, Mihai Ciolacu^{*4d}, Andrzej Piotrowski^{5d}, Davide de Gennaro^{6d}, Răzvan Marian Bucătaru^{7be}

¹Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, National University of Physical Education and Sport, Romania.²Hipnosis Trading, Bucharest, Romania.³Advanced Medical and Pharmaceutical Research Center, "George Emil Palade" University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology, Romania.⁴Faculty of Letters and Sciences, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești, Romania.⁵Institute of Psychology, University of Gdańsk, Poland.⁶Department of Medical, Exercise and Wellbeing Sciences, University "Parthenope" of Naples, Italy.⁷Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study. This study pursued two primary objectives: (1) to compare multidimensional psychological well-being between experienced sports managers and future sports managers, and (2) to examine how gender, age, marital status, and parental status are associated with differences in psychological well-being among experienced sports managers.

Materials and methods. A total of 61 participants (aged 21–60 years; 40 male, 21 female) were enrolled, comprising 28 experienced sports managers (mean managerial experience = 7.57 years) and 33 future sports managers enrolled in Sports Management and Marketing programs. The Well-Being Assessment (Adult – 24 items), a validated instrument assessing eight well-being facets, was administered via an online questionnaire.

Results. Independent samples t-tests revealed significant group differences in Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation ($t = 2.311, p = 0.024, d = 0.62$) and Financial Evaluation and Stability ($t = 3.993, p < 0.001, d = 1.03$), with experienced managers scoring higher. Mann–Whitney U tests among experienced managers indicated that female managers scored significantly higher than males on Character and Caring ($U = 29.5, p = 0.013, r = 0.61$) and Financial Evaluation and Stability ($U = 41.5, p = 0.031, r = 0.51$). Age, marital status, and parental status did not produce statistically significant differences in any well-being facet.

Conclusions. Career progression in sport management appears to consolidate life evaluation and perceived financial security without necessarily transforming eudaimonic dimensions such as meaning, character, or relational well-being. Gender emerged as the most salient sociodemographic correlate of psychological well-being in experienced sports managers, with female managers demonstrating higher prosocial orientation and perceived financial security. These findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive professional development and organizational support strategies in sport management.

Keywords: sports management; psychological well-being; sports managers; gender differences; eudaimonic well-being; life satisfaction.

ARTICLE INFO

EDITED BY

Assoc. Prof. Herli Pardilla, Ed. D.
Inspiretech Global Insight, Indonesia.

Dr. Mury Kuswary, M.si

Universitas Esa Unggul, Indonesia.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : January 24, 2026

Accepted : March 23, 2026.

Published : May 27, 2026.

CITATION

Predoiu, R., Grozav, L. M. ., Szabo, G., Ciolacu, M., Piotrowski, A., de Gennaro, D., & Bucătaru, R. M. (2026). Psychological well-being of sports managers: differences between experienced and future managers and the influence of gender, age, and family status. *INSPIREE: Indonesian Sport Innovation Review*, 7(02), 153-161. <https://doi.org/10.53905/inspiree.v7i02.177>

INTRODUCTION

Management and leadership occupy a pivotal role in the functioning and performance of sport organizations. The modern conceptualization of management derives from the verb 'to manage,' which in organizational contexts encompasses meanings such as 'to lead,' 'to control,' or 'to govern'. Classical management theory conceptualizes managerial work through a set of core functions.

^{abcde}Authors'Contribution: a-Study design; b-Data collection; c-Statistical analysis; d-Manuscript preparation; e-Funds collection.

^eCorresponding Author: Mihai Ciolacu, e-mail: ciolacu.mihai88@gmail.com



© 2026 The Author. This article is licensed CC BY SA 4.0.

visit [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Henri Fayol, one of the early theorists of management in the twentieth century, proposed five basic functions: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling (Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Subsequent scholars have refined this framework; for instance, Lloyd and Aho (2020) described four key functions—planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. In sport organizations, this complexity is further amplified by performance pressure, public visibility, and the dual need to attend to both athletic and organizational outcomes (Arnold et al., 2015; Hulme et al., 2019).

Within sport organizations, managers bear direct responsibility for achieving strategic and operational objectives and serve as key integrators of human and material resources. Research has highlighted their role in shaping organizational value through effective deployment of the diversity, competence, and motivation of human resources (Flemming, 2016; Wujarso et al., 2021). Moreover, managers are expected not only to coordinate activities but also to support employees, foster a constructive organizational climate, and manage crises—both internal (e.g., conflicts between athletes or staff) and external (e.g., financial or reputational threats). This broader view of managerial work is consistent with functional approaches to management (Lloyd & Aho, 2020) and with classic analyses of managerial roles that highlight the leader and disturbance-handler roles as central to supporting staff and responding to crises (Yukl et al., 2019). In this context, managers in sport frequently serve as mediators, trainers, and spokespersons for their clubs or federations, assuming responsibility for communication with media, stakeholders, and the broader community.

Scholars have argued that effective sport managers require a broad set of general competences (e.g., knowledge of sport systems, basic management skills, digital literacy, foreign language proficiency, and a lifelong learning orientation) as well as specific competences (e.g., planning sport services, sport marketing and branding, financial management, crisis management, and media relations) (Sesinando et al., 2022; Wohlfart et al., 2021). In addition, leadership qualities—such as trust in one's team, articulating a clear vision, emotional self-control under pressure, openness to dissent, and encouragement of calculated risk-taking—are considered essential for successful leadership in sport organizations (Adair, 2007; Bhatti et al., 2012).

Critical Examination of Existing Literature

Given this complex role, sport managers are exposed to multiple stressors: high workloads, time pressure, financial constraints, performance expectations, public scrutiny, and the continuous need to balance the demands of athletes, staff, sponsors, and governing bodies (Răducan et al., 2014). Recent research has begun to examine burnout and sleep quality in sports managers, suggesting that chronic occupational stress may undermine both health and the capacity to lead effectively (Predoiu et al., 2024). Other investigations point to the importance of temperament, coping strategies, and emotional intelligence in sport managers, demonstrating how these psychological characteristics shape responses to stress and interpersonal challenges (Bencker et al., 2022; "Temperament and Emotional Intelligence in the Case of Sports Managers," 2021).

Against this background, psychological well-being becomes a crucial topic. Psychological well-being refers to people's subjective experience of their mental states—encompassing pleasure, positive affect, life satisfaction, meaning, purpose, and self-acceptance—and to the extent to which they function optimally in personal and social domains (Dhanabhakym & Sarath, 2023). Contemporary frameworks view well-being as a multidimensional construct that integrates not only hedonic aspects (happiness, life satisfaction) but also eudaimonic aspects (meaning, personal growth, relationships, character, and contribution) (Stiefel et al., 2020). For sports managers specifically, life satisfaction and sense of meaning may be linked to long-term commitment to the profession; social support and relationships may buffer occupational stress; while perceived happiness may directly influence motivation, decision-making, and leadership behavior (Tait et al., 2020). Research in sport organizations further suggests that employees' psychological well-being and psychological resources are associated with job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Loghmani et al., 2022).

Regarding gender and well-being in sport leadership, the extant literature reveals a nuanced picture. Female professionals in sport and related sectors have been found to display strong relational and prosocial orientations, which are theoretically central to eudaimonic well-being (Avner et al., 2025). However, women in sport management also report experiencing lower job satisfaction or greater strain than male counterparts in contexts characterized by persistent gender inequities and work-family conflict (Stokowski et al., 2018). Regarding age-related trajectories, existing research suggests that well-being does not follow a simple linear pattern across the lifespan but is moderated by life-stage factors and career-related resources (Diener et al., 2018). Marital and parental status have likewise been examined as potential moderators of life satisfaction, with longitudinal evidence suggesting that marriage is associated with short-term improvements in subjective well-being followed by adaptation to previous baseline levels (Mammen et al., 2009).

Identification of Research Gaps

Despite growing scholarly interest in sport managers' professional challenges, empirical research that directly examines their multidimensional psychological well-being remains scarce. Most existing studies in the sport sector focus on job satisfaction, organizational climate, stress, coping strategies, emotional intelligence, or quality of life in specific samples (González-Bravo et al., 2022), and rarely provide systematic comparisons between experienced and future sports managers. Furthermore, the influence of sociodemographic characteristics—particularly gender, age, marital status, and parental status—on well-being within managerial populations in sport has not been systematically investigated using validated, multidimensional measures. This gap is particularly notable given the growing emphasis on sustainable talent management and personnel well-being in sport organizations.

Rationale for the Research

Understanding the psychological well-being of sports managers—both those with established careers and those at the threshold of entering the profession—is critical for several reasons. Empirical evidence linking sport employees' well-being to retention, organizational commitment, and performance underscores the organizational relevance of this question (Kim et al., 2018; Mondt et al., 2024; Swanson et al., 2022). Moreover, identifying sociodemographic correlates of well-being may inform targeted interventions and mentoring programs designed to support at-risk subgroups. The present study therefore adopts a multidimensional framework—the



Well-Being Assessment (Adult – 24 items)—to provide a comprehensive portrait of psychological well-being in two distinct populations of sports managers, thereby addressing a recognized empirical gap.

Objectives and Hypotheses

This study pursues two main objectives: (1) to describe and compare the facets of psychological well-being in experienced sports managers and future sports managers, and (2) to examine whether gender, age, marital status, and parental status are associated with well-being differences among experienced sports managers.

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H₁: There are significant differences in psychological well-being between experienced sports managers and future sports managers.

H₂: Gender and age significantly influence the perceived psychological well-being of experienced sports managers.

H₃: Marital status and parental status significantly influence psychological well-being among experienced sports managers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Participants

The study included 61 participants (40 male, 21 female) aged between 21 and 60 years. The sample was divided into two groups based on managerial experience and academic enrollment:

Experienced Sports Managers (N = 28): The subgroup comprised 19 men and 9 women. Age distribution was as follows: 23–30 years (n = 10), 31–40 years (n = 6), 41–50 years (n = 10), and 51–60 years (n = 2). Regarding marital status, 15 participants were married and 13 were unmarried. Thirteen managers had one or two children, whereas 15 were childless. Managerial experience ranged from 3 months to 24 years, with a mean of 7.57 years in a leadership position across the sample. Participants were employed in both public and private sport organizations, including state and private sport clubs, sport federations, and municipal clubs. Inclusion criteria required that participants held a formal managerial position in a sport organization for a minimum of three months at the time of data collection, consistent with prior research on sports managers that defines eligibility in terms of occupying a formal managerial role (Duclos-Bastías et al., 2021).

Future Sports Managers (N = 33): The subgroup comprised 21 men and 12 women. The majority (n = 32) were aged 21–30 years, with one participant aged 31–40 years. Thirty-two participants were unmarried and one was married; 32 participants had no children and one had one child. All participants were enrolled in third-year bachelor's programs or first- or second-year master's programs in Sports Management and Marketing in Bucharest, Romania.

Study Organization and Instrument

Data were collected between November 2024 and April 2025 via an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms (Google LLC, Mountain View, CA, United States). Prior to participation, all respondents received detailed information regarding the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the full confidentiality of their responses. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection commenced.

The instrument used was the Well-Being Assessment (Adult – 24 items), a harmonized measure developed collaboratively by the 100 Million Healthier Lives initiative and the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University (Stiefel et al., 2020). This instrument assesses eight facets of psychological well-being: (1) Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation, (2) Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function, (3) Meaning and Purpose, (4) Character and Caring, (5) Relationships, (6) Community and Social Support, (7) Financial Evaluation and Stability, and (8) Affect. The instrument comprises 24 items (three per facet). Respondents rate each item on 0–10 response scales (e.g., 0 = Worst possible to 10 = Best possible; 0 = Not at all satisfied to 10 = Completely satisfied; 0 = Strongly disagree to 10 = Strongly agree). Three items are reverse-scored. For each facet, the three corresponding items are summed to yield subscale scores ranging from 0 to 30, with higher scores indicating more favorable well-being. Example items include: “On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?” (Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation); “In general, how would you rate your physical health?” (Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function); “I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.” (Meaning and Purpose).

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using Jamovi (Version 2.7; The Jamovi Project, 2025). Data analysis proceeded in several stages. First, descriptive statistics (M, SD, minimum, maximum) were computed for each of the eight well-being facets separately for experienced and future sports managers. Distributional properties were assessed by examining skewness and kurtosis; values generally fell within the ± 1.96 interval, supporting the assumption of approximate normality (George & Mallery, 2010), with the exception of Character and Caring in experienced managers, for which variance remained homogeneous.

To test H₁, independent-samples t-tests were used to compare the two groups on each well-being facet. Homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene's test; when $p > 0.05$, the homogeneity condition was considered met (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017). Effect sizes were quantified using Cohen's d, interpreted according to conventional benchmarks: 0.2 = small, 0.5 = moderate, 0.8 = large (Predoiu, 2020). To test H₂ and H₃ among experienced sports managers, Mann–Whitney U tests were used due to the relatively small subgroup sample sizes. Comparisons were conducted for: gender (men vs. women), age group (23–40 years vs. 41–60 years), marital status (married vs. unmarried), and parental status (with vs. without children). Effect sizes for U tests were computed as r and interpreted using (Cohen, 1988) benchmarks: $r \approx 0.1$ = small, $r \approx 0.3$ = medium, $r \approx 0.5$ = large. The significance threshold was set at $p < 0.05$. Effect sizes were reported alongside p-values to convey the substantive importance of statistically significant results (Lakens, 2013).



Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in full accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki ("World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki," 2013). All participants provided written informed consent prior to enrollment, acknowledging the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of data, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. No identifying information was included in the dataset used for analysis, and all data were stored securely and accessible only to the research team. This study necessitates ethical endorsement from the appropriate institutional ethics committee, and formal ethical approval was sought and obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection. Anonymity and data protection were upheld throughout all phases of the research process.

RESULTS

Group Differences: Experienced vs. Future Sports Managers (H₁)

Independent-samples t-tests revealed that Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation differed significantly between the two groups ($t = 2.311$, $p = 0.024$, $d = 0.62$; Table 1). Experienced sports managers reported higher life satisfaction ($M = 25.2$, $SD = 3.04$) than future managers ($M = 23.6$, $SD = 2.50$). A large and significant difference was also observed for Financial Evaluation and Stability ($t = 3.993$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.03$), with experienced managers reporting substantially higher perceived financial security ($M = 22.9$, $SD = 4.15$) compared to future managers ($M = 17.5$, $SD = 5.96$). For the remaining six well-being facets—Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function; Meaning and Purpose; Character and Caring; Relationships; Community and Social Support; and Affect—group differences did not attain statistical significance (all $p > 0.05$), although mean scores consistently tended to be slightly higher in the experienced managers group. These results provide partial support for H₁.

Table 1. Independent-samples t-test results for psychological well-being facets by group (experienced vs. future sports managers).

Well-Being Facet	Levene's F	Levene's p	t	p	Cohen's d
Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation	1.969	0.166	2.311	0.024*	0.62
Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function	1.896	0.174	0.579	0.565	—
Meaning and Purpose	0.101	0.752	1.579	0.120	—
Character and Caring	4.429	0.060	1.287	0.203	—
Relationships	1.525	0.222	1.268	0.210	—
Community and Social Support	6.031	0.017	1.007	0.318	—
Financial Evaluation and Stability	5.691	0.020	3.993	< .001***	1.03
Affect	0.773	0.383	1.695	0.095	—

Note. Levene's test assesses homogeneity of variances; t-values refer to Student's t-test for independent samples; Cohen's d effect sizes are reported for statistically significant comparisons only. * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Gender and Age Differences Among Experienced Sports Managers (H₂)

Descriptive analyses indicated that female experienced managers had slightly higher mean scores than male managers across all eight well-being facets. Mann–Whitney U tests revealed two statistically significant gender differences (Table 2). Female managers scored significantly higher than male managers on Character and Caring ($U = 29.5$, $p = 0.013$, $r = 0.61$; M_2 female = 26.9, $SD = 1.81$; M_2 male = 24.1, $SD = 3.03$) and on Financial Evaluation and Stability ($U = 41.5$, $p = 0.031$, $r = 0.51$; M_2 female = 25.3, $SD = 2.18$; M_2 male = 21.7, $SD = 4.39$). According to (Cohen, 1988) benchmarks, both effect sizes are large, indicating meaningful gender-related differences in prosocial orientation and perceived financial security among experienced sports managers. No significant age-group differences were detected across the eight well-being facets. However, a marginally significant trend emerged for Character and Caring ($U = 48.5$, $p = 0.051$, $r = 0.45$), with the younger group (23–40 years) scoring higher ($M = 26.1$, $SD = 1.77$) than the older group (41–60 years; $M = 23.2$, $SD = 3.63$). These findings provide only limited support for H₂: gender appears to be a more salient moderator of psychological well-being than age in the investigated sample.

Table 2. Mann–Whitney U test results for psychological well-being among experienced sports managers, by gender and age group.

Well-Being Facet	Variable	Comparison	U	p	Effect Size (r)
Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation	Gender	Women vs. men	48.5	0.071	-0.43
Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function	Gender	Women vs. men	82.0	0.882	-0.04
Meaning and Purpose	Gender	Women vs. men	67.5	0.384	-0.21
Character and Caring	Gender	Women vs. men	29.5	0.013*	-0.61
Relationships	Gender	Women vs. men	56.0	0.205	-0.30
Community and Social Support	Gender	Women vs. men	54.0	0.168	-0.33
Financial Evaluation and Stability	Gender	Women vs. men	41.5	0.031*	-0.51
Affect	Gender	Women vs. men	82.5	0.901	-0.03
Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	93.0	0.907	-0.03
Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	95.0	0.981	0.01
Meaning and Purpose	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	92.0	0.869	-0.04
Character and Caring	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	48.5	0.051†	-0.45
Relationships	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	82.0	0.785	0.07
Community and Social Support	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	64.0	0.208	-0.29
Financial Evaluation and Stability	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	88.5	0.744	-0.07
Affect	Age group	23–40 vs. 41–60	91.0	0.833	-0.05

Note. Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted among experienced sports managers ($N = 28$). $r =$ effect size. * $p < 0.05$; † $p < 0.06$ (marginal).



Marital and Parental Status Differences (H₃)

Analyses examining marital status (married vs. unmarried) among experienced sports managers yielded no statistically significant differences in any of the eight well-being facets (all $p > 0.05$; Table 3). Nonetheless, nuanced descriptive tendencies were observed: married managers reported marginally higher scores for Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation ($M_{2\text{married}} = 25.8$, $SD = 3.21$ vs. $M_{2\text{unmarried}} = 24.5$, $SD = 2.79$) and for Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function ($M_{2\text{married}} = 25.1$, $SD = 3.79$ vs. $M_{2\text{unmarried}} = 24.5$, $SD = 3.80$). Similarly, analyses of parental status (with vs. without children) did not yield statistically significant differences (all $p > 0.05$; Table 3). Descriptively, managers without children reported slightly higher financial stability ($M_{2\text{without children}} = 23.7$, $SD = 3.84$ vs. $M_{2\text{with children}} = 21.9$, $SD = 4.42$), while managers with children reported slightly higher scores on the Meaning and Purpose facet ($M_{2\text{with children}} = 26.9$, $SD = 3.04$ vs. $M_{2\text{without children}} = 26.1$, $SD = 3.11$), suggesting that parenthood may modestly enhance perceptions of life purpose. Overall, these results do not support H₃, indicating that marital and parental status are not major determinants of psychological well-being in this sample of experienced sports managers.

Table 3. Mann–Whitney U test results for psychological well-being among experienced sports managers, by marital and parental status.

Well-Being Facet	Variable	Comparison	U	p	Effect Size (r)
Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	79.0	0.404	0.19
Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	87.5	0.660	0.10
Meaning and Purpose	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	93.0	0.852	-0.04
Character and Caring Relationships	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	62.5	0.169	-0.31
Relationships	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	81.5	0.695	-0.09
Community and Social Support	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	74.5	0.432	-0.18
Financial Evaluation and Stability	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	70.0	0.211	-0.28
Affect	Marital status	Married vs. unmarried	80.5	0.444	0.17
Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation	Parental status	With vs. without children	93.5	0.871	-0.04
Physical Health, Mental Health, and Physical Function	Parental status	With vs. without children	92.0	0.817	-0.05
Meaning and Purpose	Parental status	With vs. without children	90.5	0.762	0.07
Character and Caring Relationships	Parental status	With vs. without children	79.0	0.572	-0.13
Relationships	Parental status	With vs. without children	89.5	0.961	-0.01
Community and Social Support	Parental status	With vs. without children	78.0	0.570	-0.13
Financial Evaluation and Stability	Parental status	With vs. without children	69.5	0.202	-0.28
Affect	Parental status	With vs. without children	91.0	0.781	-0.06

Note. Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted among experienced sports managers ($N = 28$). r = effect size. No statistically significant differences were found (all $p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

Interpreting the Research Outcomes

The present study examined psychological well-being in experienced sports managers and future sports managers using a validated, multidimensional instrument. Overall, the findings indicated that experienced managers reported significantly higher scores on Life Satisfaction and Life Evaluation and on Financial Evaluation and Stability compared to future managers, whereas differences in the remaining six well-being facets were not statistically significant. These findings provide partial support for H₁ and are consistent with the notion that career progression in sport management may consolidate certain aspects of well-being—particularly global life evaluation and perceived financial security—without necessarily transforming deeper eudaimonic dimensions such as meaning, character, or relationships.

Evaluation in Relation to Antecedent Studies

The higher life satisfaction and financial stability observed among experienced sports managers align partially with prior research on job satisfaction and well-being in the sport sector. Empirical studies on sports managers and sport employees generally suggest moderate levels of job satisfaction, influenced by working conditions, organizational support, and career prospects (Dixon & Warner, 2010; Felipe et al., 2018; Grimaldi et al., 2018). Research with sports managers has also shown that satisfaction levels are not uniformly high, reflecting challenges linked to resources, recognition, and role overload (McLeod et al., 2022). The present findings add nuance by focusing on distinct facets of psychological well-being: the higher life satisfaction and financial security reported by experienced managers suggest that those who remain in managerial roles over time may develop adaptive coping strategies, secure more stable positions, or self-select into environments that better align with their values and competencies. This interpretation is broadly consistent with evidence that sport employees' well-being is shaped by the interaction among job characteristics, leadership, and organizational climate (Kim et al., 2018; Sport Leadership and Wellbeing, 2024; Swanson et al., 2022), for example, demonstrated that servant leadership and teamwork predict multidimensional employee well-being in sport organizations, including life satisfaction and physical health.



The absence of significant differences between experienced and future sports managers on facets such as Meaning and Purpose, Relationships, Community and Social Support, Character and Caring, and Affect is noteworthy. This pattern suggests that students enrolled in sport management and marketing programs may already possess relatively high levels of meaning, relational engagement, and positive affect, possibly reflecting vocational interest and intrinsic motivation for working in sport. This observation resonates with self-determination theory research in sport, which demonstrates that autonomous motivation is closely associated with higher subjective well-being and positive functioning (Antunes et al., 2024; Kouali et al., 2021).

The significant gender-related differences observed in Character and Caring and Financial Evaluation and Stability suggest that female sports managers in the present sample may embody a particularly prosocial leadership orientation and simultaneously perceive higher financial security compared to their male counterparts. These findings resonate with evidence that female professionals in sport and related sectors often display strong relational and prosocial orientations central to eudaimonic well-being (Pérez-Rivas et al., 2017). The results stand in partial contrast, however, to some research suggesting that women in sport management may experience lower job satisfaction or greater strain than men in contexts where gender inequities and work-family conflict persist (Stokowski et al., 2018). The absence of significant age-related differences in psychological well-being is consistent with broader evidence that age per se exerts a modest independent effect on well-being when occupational and financial factors are considered (Diener et al., 2018). The marginally significant trend for Character and Caring—with younger managers scoring slightly higher—may reflect life-stage dynamics in which earlier career phases are associated with heightened social engagement and prosocial motivation. The absence of significant marital and parental status effects aligns with longitudinal research demonstrating that marriage is associated with short-term well-being increases followed by adaptation to prior baseline levels (Lucas & Clark, 2006). The subtle descriptive trends observed—married managers reporting slightly higher life satisfaction, managers with children reporting slightly higher meaning, and managers without children reporting slightly higher financial stability—are theoretically coherent and merit replication in larger samples.

Implications of the Discoveries

The findings carry several practical implications for sport organizations and professional development programs. First, the lower life satisfaction and financial security reported by future managers underscores the importance of providing career mentoring, transparent promotion pathways, and structured financial guidance to early-career professionals in sport management. Second, the gender differences observed in prosocial orientation and perceived financial security suggest that organizations should invest in gender-sensitive leadership development initiatives that recognize and leverage the distinctive strengths of female managers. Third, the comparable levels of meaning, relationships, and affect between experienced and future managers point to the potential benefits of intentionally cultivating vocational identity, purpose, and relational well-being from the earliest stages of sport management education. For sport organizations, the broader findings highlight the importance of promoting financial stability, transparent career pathways, and supportive leadership cultures, all of which have been linked to retention, organizational commitment, and performance (Anderski et al., 2023; Næss, 2021; Zhang & Koshmanova, 2021).

Limitations of the Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size—particularly for subgroup analyses (e.g., gender, age, marital, and parental status among experienced managers)—was relatively small, reducing statistical power and increasing the risk of Type II errors and unstable effect size estimates (Cohen, 1988; Field, 2018). Future research should recruit larger, more diverse samples spanning different national sport systems and competitive levels. Second, all data were collected via self-report at a single time point, precluding causal inference and potentially introducing common method variance and social desirability bias (Predoiu et al., 2022; Teixidor-Battle et al., 2021). Longitudinal and mixed-method designs—including daily diary studies or qualitative interviews—would provide richer insight into how psychological well-being fluctuates over time and relates to specific stressors, organizational events, and career transitions (Frost et al., 2024; Norris et al., 2017). Third, while the Well-Being Assessment (Adult – 24 items) offers a useful multidimensional framework, it may not capture all aspects of well-being particularly salient in sport management, such as work-life balance, former athlete or coach identity, and exposure to public scrutiny or media pressure. The contextual particularities of the Romanian national sport system also limit the generalizability of findings to other cultural or organizational settings. Future research could extend these findings by linking managers' psychological well-being scores to independent assessments of leadership behaviors (e.g., transformational or servant leadership) and to outcomes such as staff satisfaction, team cohesion, and organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored psychological well-being among experienced sports managers and future sports managers using a comprehensive, multidimensional framework encompassing life evaluation, health, meaning, character, relationships, community support, financial stability, and affect. The findings converge on three principal conclusions.

First, career progression in sport management appears to consolidate specific dimensions of psychological well-being—particularly global life satisfaction and perceived financial security—while leaving deeper eudaimonic dimensions such as meaning, character, and relational well-being broadly comparable between experienced and future managers. This pattern suggests that future sports managers already enter the profession with a robust foundation of eudaimonic resources, which is encouraging for the vitality of sport management as a vocation, but also underscores the need for structural conditions—particularly financial stability and clear career advancement opportunities—that allow experienced managers to sustain high well-being over time.

Second, gender emerged as a more salient sociodemographic correlate of psychological well-being than age, marital status, or parental status among experienced managers. Female sports managers reported higher levels of prosocial engagement (Character



and Caring) and perceived financial security, pointing to the potential importance of gendered pathways in the development of people-oriented leadership and perceived organizational security in sport organizations. Although based on a relatively small sample, this pattern warrants systematic investigation in future research with larger and more diverse samples.

Third, marital and parental status were not major determinants of psychological well-being in experienced sports managers, a finding consistent with broader evidence from happiness and well-being research indicating that relationship and family variables exert modest independent effects once occupational and financial factors are accounted for.

From a practical standpoint, sport organizations and educational programs in sport management are encouraged to (1) implement structured mentoring and financial guidance for early-career managers, (2) develop gender-sensitive leadership programs that recognize the distinctive strengths of female managers, and (3) cultivate vocational identity and relational well-being from the earliest stages of sport management training. Future investigations should adopt longitudinal designs, expand sample diversity across national contexts, and integrate objective performance indicators alongside self-reported well-being measures to establish a more complete understanding of the determinants and consequences of psychological well-being in sport management.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors extend sincere gratitude to all sports managers and students who voluntarily participated in this study and generously dedicated their time to completing the research instrument. The third author contributed equally to this study alongside the first author

REFERENCES

- Adair, J. E. (2007). Develop Your Leadership Skills. In *CERN Document Server (European Organization for Nuclear Research)*. European Organization for Nuclear Research. <http://cds.cern.ch/record/2235179>
- Anderski, M., Griebel, L., Stegmann, P., & Ströbel, T. (2023). Empowerment of human brands: Brand meaning co-creation on digital engagement platforms. *Journal of Business Research*, 166, 113905. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113905>
- Antunes, R., Rodrigues, F., Jacinto, M., Amaro, N., Matos, R., & Monteiro, D. (2024). Exploring the relationship across autonomous motivation, affects, and anxiety among gym practitioners during the second COVID-19 lockdown. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-57878-2>
- Arnold, R., Fletcher, D., & Anderson, R. J. (2015). Leadership and Management in Elite Sport: Factors Perceived to Influence Performance. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 10, 285. <https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.10.2-3.285>
- Avner, Z., Jones, L., Stodter, A., & Jeffrey, A. (2025). Gender and Diversity Responsive Coaching: Building Capacity Through Relational, Feminist-Informed, Intersectional, Transdisciplinary, and E/Affective Coach Development. *Education Sciences*, 15(7), 812. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15070812>
- Bencker, A., Brandebo, M. F., Ivarsson, A., & Johnson, U. (2022). Common demanding conditions among professional high-level military and sport leaders: a cross-contextual qualitative reflexive thematic analysis. *Scandinavian Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 4(1), 27. <https://doi.org/10.7146/sjsep.v4i1.130547>
- Bhatti, N., Maitlo, G. M., Shaikh, N. A., Hashmi, M. A., & Shaikh, F. M. (2012). The Impact of Autocratic and Democratic Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction. *International Business Research*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v5n2p192>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.)*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dhanabhakya, M., & Sarath, M. (2023). Psychological Wellbeing: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science Communication and Technology*, 603. <https://doi.org/10.48175/ijarsct-8345>
- Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2018). Advances and Open Questions in the Science of Subjective Well-Being. *Collabra Psychology*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.115>
- Dixon, M. A., & Warner, S. (2010). Employee Satisfaction in Sport: Development of a Multi-Dimensional Model in Coaching. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24(2), 139. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.24.2.139>
- Duclos-Bastías, D., Giakoni-Ramírez, F., Parra-Camacho, D., Rendic-Vera, W., Rementera-Vera, N., & Gajardo-Araya, G. (2021). Better managers for more sustainability sports organizations: Validation of Sports Managers Competency Scale (COSM) in Chile. *Sustainability*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020724>
- Felipe, G., Sánchez, G. F. L., José, F., Balsalobre, Y. B., & Arturo, D. (2018). *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 2018(3). <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2018.s3212>
- Field, A. P. (2018). *EBOOK : Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics 5th Edition*. https://opac.lib.inaba.ac.id/index.php?p=show_detail&id=2498&keywords=
- Flemming, P. L. (2016). Similarities and Differences between Public and Private Sector Leadership Strategies in the Caribbean: Empirical Findings on the Link between Leadership, Culture, and Performance. *Business and Management Studies*, 2(4), 1. <https://doi.org/10.11114/bms.v2i4.1863>
- Frost, J., Walton, C. C., Purcell, R., Fisher, K., Gwyther, K., Kocherginsky, M., & Rice, S. (2024). The Mental Health of Elite-Level Coaches: A Systematic Scoping Review. *Sports Medicine - Open*, 10(1), 16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40798-023-00655-8>
- George, D., & Mallery, M. (2010). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference, 17.0 update (10th ed.)*. Pearson.
- González-Bravo, J., Yanci, J., Cayero, R., & Martínez-Aldama, I. (2022). Analysis of job satisfaction as perceived by workers in the sports sector: A systematic review. *Revista Iberoamericana de Ciencias de La Actividad Física y El Deporte*, 11(2), 134.
- Gravetter, F. J., & Wallnau, L. B. (2017). *Statistics for the behavioral sciences (10th ed.)*. Cengage Learning.



- Grimaldi, M., Puyana, M. G., Pérez-Villalba, M., García, A. B., & Sánchez-Oliver, A. J. (2018). *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 2018(3). <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2018.s3204>
- Hulme, A., McLean, S., Read, G. J. M., Dallat, C., Bedford, A., & Salmon, P. M. (2019). Sports Organizations as Complex Systems: Using Cognitive Work Analysis to Identify the Factors Influencing Performance in an Elite Netball Organization. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2019.00056>
- Kim, M., Kim, A. C. H., Newman, J. I., Ferris, G. R., & Perrewé, P. L. (2018). The antecedents and consequences of positive organizational behavior: The role of psychological capital for promoting employee well-being in sport organizations. *Sport Management Review*, 22(1), 108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.04.003>
- Kouali, D., Hall, C., Divine, A., & Pope, J. P. (2021). Motivation and Eudaimonic Well-Being in Athletes: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 93(3), 457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2020.1864259>
- Lakens, D. (2013). Calculating and reporting effect sizes to facilitate cumulative science: a practical primer for t-tests and ANOVAs. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4, 863. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00863>
- Lloyd, R., & Aho, W. (2020). *The Four Functions of Management - An essential guide to Management Principles*. <https://doi.org/10.58809/cnfs7851>
- Loghmani, M., Cuskelly, G., & Webb, T. (2022). Human resource retention in sport: The impact of self-reflective job titles on job burnout and security. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 24(1), 178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2022.2093931>
- Lucas, R. E., & Clark, A. E. (2006). Do People Really Adapt To Marriage? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7(4), 405. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9001-x>
- Mammen, S., Bauer, J. W., & Lass, D. A. (2009). Life Satisfaction Over Time Among Rural Low-Income Mothers. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1345098>
- McLeod, C. J., Agha, N., & Rosenblum-Larson, S. (2022). *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.25035/jade.04.03.00>
- Mondt, A., Hajek, T., & Otto, M. G. (2024). Women collegiate sport employees: Organizational elements of workplace and engagement. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.17161/jas.v10i1.21203>
- Næss, H. E. (2021). *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 21(3). <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2021.s3254>
- Norris, L. A., Didymus, F. F., & Kaiseler, M. (2017). Stressors, coping, and well-being among sports coaches: A systematic review. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 33, 93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.08.005>
- Pérez-Rivases, A., Torregrosa, M., Viladrich, C., & Pallarès, S. (2017). Women Occupying Management Positions in Top-Level Sport Organizations: a Self-Determination Perspective. *SHILAP Revista de Lepidopterología*. <https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.33.1.229171>
- Predoiu, A. (2020). *Metodologia cercetării științifice. Aplicații practice și elemente de statistică neparametrică [Scientific research methodology: Practical applications and elements of nonparametric statistics]*. Discobolul.
- Predoiu, R., Makarowski, R., Görner, K., Predoiu, A., Boe, O., Ciolacu, M. V., Grigoriu, C., & Piotrowski, A. (2022). Aggression in martial arts coaches and sports performance with the COVID-19 pandemic in the background: A dual processing analysis. *Archives of Budo*, 18, 23.
- Predoiu, R., Popa, D., Grigore, G., Mitrache, G., & Predoiu, A. (2024). Burnout and sleep quality in sports managers. *Applied Psychology Research*, 3(2), 1543. <https://doi.org/10.59400/apr1543>
- Pryor, M. G., & Taneja, S. (2010). Henri Fayol, practitioner and theoretician – revered and reviled. *Journal of Management History*, 16(4), 489. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17511341011073960>
- Răducan, R., Răducan, R., Răducan, R., & Răducan, R. (2014). Leadership and Management. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 149, 808. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.08.322>
- Sesinando, A. D., Urbaneja, J. S., & Teixeira, M. C. (2022). *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 22(10). <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2022.11355>
- Sport Leadership and Wellbeing*. (2024). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367766924-ress100-0>
- Stiefel, M. C., McNeely, E., Riley, C. L., Roy, B., Straszewski, T., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2020). *Well-Being Assessment (Adult – 24 items)*. 100 Million Healthier Lives. https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/sites/g/files/omnuum8886/files/pik/files/100mlives_well-being_assessment.pdf
- Stokowski, S., Li, B., Goss, B. D., Hutchens, S., & Turk, M. (2018). Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction of Sport Management Faculty Members. *Sport Management Education Journal*, 12(2), 80. <https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.2017-0011>
- Swanson, S., Todd, S. Y., Inoue, Y., & Peachey, J. W. (2022). Leading for multidimensional sport employee well-being: the role of servant leadership and teamwork. *Sport Management Review*, 25(5), 748. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14413523.2021.2014225>
- Tait, J. L., Kremer, P., Carson, F., Walsh, J., & Main, L. C. (2020). *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 2020(5). <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2020.s5391>
- Teixidor-Battle, C., Ventura, C., & Andrés, A. (2021). Eating Disorder Symptoms in Elite Spanish Athletes: Prevalence and Sport-Specific Weight Pressures. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 559832. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.559832>
- Temperament and emotional intelligence in the case of sports managers. (2021). *Discobolul*, 170. <https://doi.org/10.35189/dpeskj.2021.60.2.9>
- Wohlfart, O., Adam, S., & Hovemann, G. (2021). Asymmetry in information acquisition—Exploring the principal-agent dyad of sport organizations and sport management higher education institutions. *German Journal of Exercise and Sport Research*, 51(3), 344. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12662-021-00722-w>
- World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki. (2013). *JAMA*, 310(20), 2191. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.281053>



- Wujarso, R., Saprudin, S., & Dameraia, R. (2021). Human Capital Management as a Resource in Achieving Competitive Advantage. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal) Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 3052. <https://doi.org/10.33258/birci.v4i2.2023>
- Yukl, G., Mahsud, R., Prussia, G. E., & Hassan, S. (2019). Effectiveness of broad and specific leadership behaviors. *Personnel Review*, 48(3), 774. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-03-2018-0100>
- Zhang, W., & Koshmanova, T. (2021). From Personal Experiences of Transformative Learning on Educational Challenges and Reforms in Secondary School in China. *International Journal of Education (IJE)*, 9(3), 33. <https://doi.org/10.5121/ije2021.9304>

