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Soft and hard skill assessments for prospective employees as part of the recruitment process for high-quality sports human resources

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ABSTRACT

The sport industry has grown rapidly as a strategic sector that contributes to economic growth and employment. This development also increases the need for professional human resources and the integration of technology in sport organizations. This study aims to review the literature on employee recruitment or human resources (HR), particularly in the field of sport. The filtering process began with a search in one journal database, namely Scopus, using the keywords Sport AND Human AND Resource AND Recruitment, which yielded 93 articles. The articles were screened through several stages following the steps in the PRISMA diagram, and ultimately 6 relevant articles were identified. These articles were open access so that readers could more easily locate and access the source articles. The results revealed several major themes: (1) professionalism: large scale does not guarantee stability; (2) external pressure and data rationality in decision-making; (3) competence and technology as organizational resilience; and (4) planning is the key to club sustainability. The conclusion for future research is how many sports organizations conduct a series of skills tests to validate certifications or administrative data of prospective employees, along with the use of technology in these recruitment processes.



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Introduction

Human resources (HR) in sports require sufficient soft skills both within organizations and in the community. (Guidotti et al., 2023) Leadership, communication skills, teamwork, and problem-solving are some of the soft skills needed in the field of sports management. These competencies can contribute to the success of sports programs. Experience gained through integrated work-based learning during the organization of sporting events can enhance communication and collaboration and help prepare sports management students for the workforce, serving as valuable preparation before they enter the professional world (Miller et al., 2022). It is crucial for sports professionals to develop soft skills; as evidenced by the theoretical discussion above, soft skills are an integral part of anyone's journey when they decide to pursue sports management or human resource development.

Hard skills are the next set of competencies for sports professionals. Hard skills can help individuals perform managerial and operational tasks when managing an event or organization. An understanding of sports management, planning, financial management, facility management, marketing, and the use of technology are examples of hard skills in sports. (Wohlfart et al., 2022) Demands in the sports industry include competencies in sports management, general management, digitalization, and marketing. Technical mastery including competencies in program planning, sports administration, finance, and evaluation is the foundation for anyone seeking to become a professional in the sports field (de Luca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016). Improving hard skills must be a priority in the sports world, given that sports human resources themselves will drive the growth and development of sports so that they can be accepted and enjoyed by all segments of society; thus, sports professionals must be competent to keep pace with the industry's dynamics.

The increasing number of factors considered in determining the success of the sports industry has an impact on the human resources recruitment process. Adapting to the surrounding environment, digital literacy, and leadership are advanced skills required for anyone seeking a career through sports organizations. Recruitment at this time is heavily influenced by subjective assessments, evaluating candidates based on online observations. International sports organizations, which are currently facing the effects of globalization and advancements in science and technology, must adopt data-driven HR recruitment processes to ensure accountability for transparency and objectivity. (Fangni, 2025) companies must carefully consider work experience in the field of sports management; it is not merely about having experience candidates must be able to provide authentic evidence that their experience enables them to produce work that aligns with the employer's expectations. Companies must consider work experience in the field of sports management; it is not merely about experience prospective employees must be able to provide authentic evidence that their experience enables them to produce work that meets the employer's expectations (Grant et al., 2024).

Given the above circumstances, researchers are interested in conducting a systematic study to examine the state of the human resources recruitment process in the world of sports. As job demands become increasingly diverse and complex, the recruitment process must be grounded in a strong theoretical framework to ensure that it remains based on objective assessments and minimizes subjectivity.

Method

This systematic review used the PRISMA Flowchart as the reference framework. Articles were collected from the Scopus database using the keyword combination Sport AND Human AND Resource AND Recruitment, which yielded 93 articles. The authors selected the Scopus options "English language" and "open access" as the first filter and obtained 37 articles. The next filter, "discuss about management," reduced the number to 19 articles. The authors then applied the filter "discuss about sport human resource recruitment," resulting in 8 articles. As a final step, the authors read each document individually and applied a last filter requiring the article to be open access, because some articles could not be accessed free of charge, and to be an original research article rather than a literature review. The result consisted of 6 articles.

The Method section describes in detail how the study was conducted, including conceptual and operational definitions of the variables used in the study, Different types of studies will rely on different methodologies; however, a complete description of the methods used enables the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of your methods and the reliability and the validity of your results, It also permits experienced investigators to replicate the study, If your manuscript is an update of an ongoing or earlier study and the method has been published in detail elsewhere, you may refer the reader to that source and simply give a brief synopsis of the method in this section.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Articles written in English	Articles not written in English
Open-access articles	Non-open-access articles
Articles discussing sport human resource recruitment	Articles not discussing sport human resource recruitment
Original research articles (not literature reviews)	Literature reviews

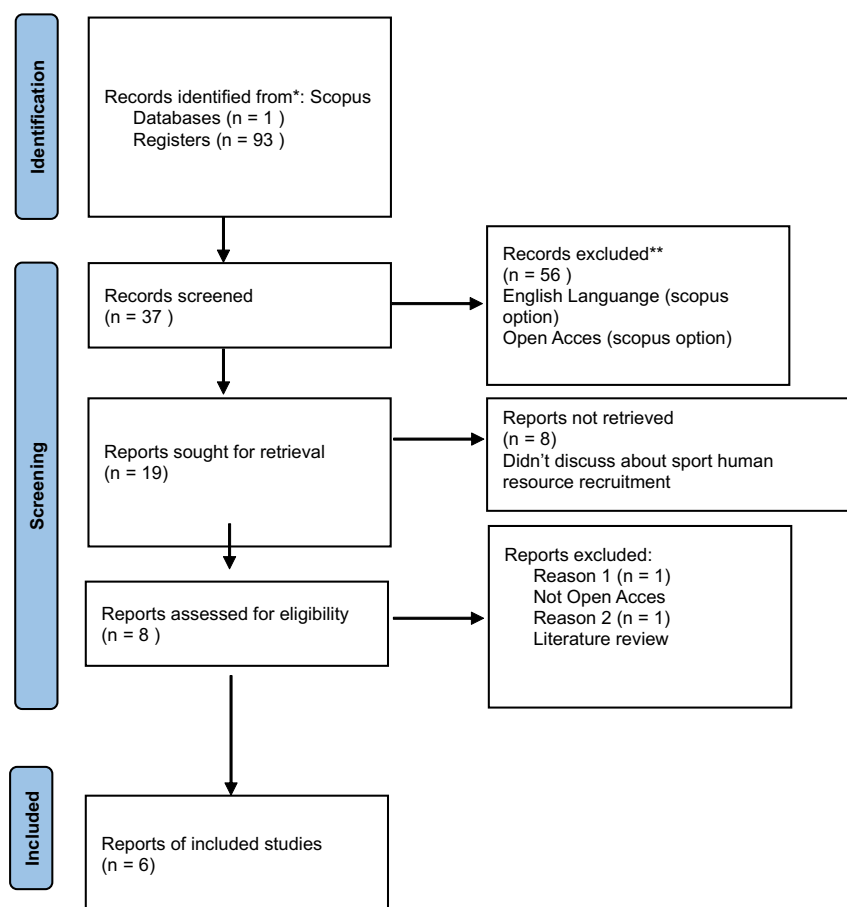


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

Table 2. Article Analysis Results

Author and Year	Study Title	Method	Sample	Findings
Dickson (2022)	A Strategic Human Resource Management Approach to Facilitating Volunteer Legacies from Mega-Sport Events: The Moderating Impact of Gender and Experience in the Case of Rio 2016	Quantitative approach (postpositivist paradigm) Research design: survey using an online questionnaire	Rio 2016 Olympic volunteers Female 55.1% and male 44.9%	Recruitment, work allocation, and task variety had a significant positive effect on volunteer satisfaction. However, volunteer training and overall satisfaction had a negative effect on volunteer legacy potential.
Seippel et al. (2023)	In Troubled Water? European Sports Clubs: Their Problems, Capacities and Opportunities	Cross-national comparative quantitative study	Belgium, Denmark, England, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Spain Total respondents:	The biggest problems faced by sports clubs in Europe are limited human resources and facilities, mainly driven by weak organizational planning, financial deficits, and poor

Author and Year	Study Title	Method	Sample	Findings
Xu et al. (2025)	How Does Artificial Intelligence Shape Supply Chain Resilience? The Moderating Role of the CEOs' Sport Experience	Quantitative study (explanatory research)	30,455 sports clubs	internal social climate within clubs.
			Sample criteria: sports clubs officially registered in national sports federations	
			Companies listed on China's A-share stock markets on the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges from 2009-2022 as the initial sample	1. AI had a significant effect on improvement and diffusion effects within supply chain resilience networks. 2. CEOs with sports experience strengthened the positive effect of AI on supply chain resilience. 3. The effect of AI on supply chain resilience was stronger in firms and regions with strong human resources and digital infrastructure.
Galdino et al. (2022)	(Un)Sustainable Human Resource Management in Brazilian Football? Empirical Evidence on Coaching Recruitment and Dismissal	Qualitative study (semi-structured interviews)	26 elite coaches	The study showed that HR management of football coaches in Brazil was unsustainable because there was no professional human resource management system, clubs focused more on short-term development, and coach turnover was very high.
Cortellazzo et al. (2021)	Experiences That Matter: Unraveling the Link Between Extracurricular Activities and Emotional and Social Competencies	Explanatory quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design	324 master's students in Italy; 70% female, 30% male, average age 24.5 years	The study showed that not all extracurricular activities had the same impact on students' emotional and social competencies. Voluntary activities had no significant impact on the competencies

Author and Year	Study Title	Method	Sample	Findings
Surujlal (2014)	Examining the Relationship Between Selected Human Resources Practices in Professional Sport Coaching	Quantitative approach with a survey design	Professional sports coaches working in sports organizations across nine provinces in South Africa Level 1 and level 2 coaching qualifications Non-probability convenience sampling technique	studied. Cultural activities had a positive impact on relationship management and tended to improve cognitive competencies. Overseas experience had the strongest and most consistent impact on self-management, relationship management, and cognitive competencies. Meanwhile, sports had a positive impact on self-management, but not on relationship management. 1. Recruitment and selection had a strong relationship with job security and industrial relations. 2. Training and development had a significant relationship with compensation, job security, and industrial relations. 3. Compensation was significantly related to job security. 4. Job security had a strong relationship with industrial relations and employment stability for professional coaches.

Results and Discussions

Results

The selection process from 93 articles to 6 articles indicates that studies on sport human resource recruitment that specifically address managerial aspects and are based on empirical research remain relatively limited. This condition indicates that the management of sports human resources, particularly the topic of strategic recruitment, has not been extensively examined in depth as a key factor in professionalism. The authors retained

the final filter requiring open-access documents so that readers can still access the source articles easily without needing to contact the original authors. The findings from the articles analyzed show that professionalism in sports organizations does not always correlate with organizational scale. Large scale does not automatically guarantee high stability.

The key points identified in the six articles above are professionalism, external pressure, “planning is the key,” and competence and technology. The main finding highlighted is that professionalism can be fostered through training programs tailored to consumer preferences; however, repetitive training programs can lead to boredom among potential consumers. The challenges based on these findings will be discussed in detail below.

Discussions

Professionalism: Large Scale Does Not Guarantee Stability

Developing a model for a sports center has benefits, namely a clear employee selection process based on competence, and for prospective applicants, clear requirements when they are willing to apply (Teodora, 2020). Training is a solution that can be provided to address professionalism issues. Volunteers may be influenced by several aspects, including political, legal, cultural, and social factors, in their participation in a major sporting event (Dickson et al., 2024). Furthermore, the first article (Dickson) provides a note, as stated in Table 2, that repeatedly delivered training can produce a negative effect because trainees require new training that can enhance their competencies.

Improving the quality of human resources can indeed be achieved through training. Changes in the sports management environment have made continuing professional education a necessity, as well as the development of competencies in sports management (Nessel & Drewniak, 2020). Collaboration between the education industry and universities or educational institutions can have a positive impact, as the knowledge gained during education is linked to practical fieldwork and aligned with professional standards (Brady et al., 2018). Given these conditions, it is time for HRD professionals in the sports industry to evaluate prospective employees not only based on certifications or training they have completed but also on their work experience, and to implement a process for validating participants' soft and hard skills. This validation process can be conducted through skills tests to verify whether prospective employees possess the competencies listed in their application documents.

Training certifications have not yet been able to provide evidence of an individual's skills (Mohrenweiser et al., 2020). HRD can reduce uncertainty about prospective employees through certifications, but an individual's work productivity does not directly increase simply by obtaining a certification. Certifications that are easily obtained diminish the value of the certificate. Job candidates with certifications have a high chance of being hired, but it cannot be determined whether those candidates hold certifications that align with the company's needs (Aerne & Bonoli, 2024). Given the conditions described above, it is time for the sports human resources recruitment sector to scrutinize the quality of certifications and continue to administer both hard and soft skills tests for each job candidate to ensure that newly recruited employees meet the company's needs.

Human resource management begins with the initial recruitment of those who become the founders of an organization; therefore, founders of sports organizations or sports clubs should naturally come from people who are competent in their field. Managers, as one part of human resources, must play a role in following change (Piwowar-Sule, 2020). (Li et al., 2022) state that membership and staff recruitment processes are now widely publicized through digital media. Disseminating recruitment information on a massive scale creates the consequence that the variety of applicants or prospective employees becomes increasingly diverse; therefore, recruitment planning needs to be prepared carefully.

A fulfilled quality of life for employees is directly proportional to their level of seriousness (Suci et al., 2022). Opinions about employees in sports organizations depend on the extent of their involvement in the sports world (Oh et al., 2023). This means that professionalism in sport emerges from how often, or how long, a person is involved in sport, and through that extended time seriousness develops within everyone and creates a good quality of life.

External Pressure and Data Rationality in Decision-Making

Article 6 in Table 2 (Surujlal, 2014) states that the human resource division has the function of screening competent prospective employees so that they can be placed according to their respective fields, allowing the organization to benefit from the competencies they possess. The HR department can encourage employee involvement in the organization by resolving complaints and managing relationships among employees (Basnyat & Clarence Lao, 2019). This statement strengthens the understanding that organizations need placement that fits employee competence to benefit from employee recruitment outcomes. This is reinforced by (Alzoubi, 2020), who argues that the recruitment process plays an important role in HRM so that proper placement in employee positions resulting from selection does not cause organizational losses, for example in relation to salary costs. Employee performance that does not meet the organization's expectations will be

detrimental because the salaries that have been paid become wasted, considering that the results of such expenditure are still viewed as disproportionate to the costs incurred; therefore, (Papademetriou et al., 2025) argue that reducing resource use can be done by establishing measurable goals.

Including human resource planning in organizational design as a form of commitment is considered necessary, and throughout the course of the organization it can be used as a tool for monitoring company policies (Abbas et al., 2022). There needs to be clarity regarding short-term and long-term targets during the coach recruitment process to avoid ongoing coach turnover (Galdino et al., 2022). Galdino, namely article number 4 in Table 2, explains further in the study that coach dismissal is very likely to occur because of pressure from external parties, and that in Brazil the human resource division in coach selection is still not optimal, resulting in the absence of long-term thinking.

Accountability implies freedom to choose, in the sense that sanctions can be imposed on employees who violate rules through their actions at work (Al Adwan, 2024). In addition to data accountability, management in sport should at least provide incentives or rewards to workers as a form of recognition. In this regard, the authors also highlight that the position of accountability in sports HRM is important to examine in future research, given that in the sporting world everything can be measured systematically. Accountability is already obligatory for all sports personnel, both managerial staff and athletes, if standards and limits within the organization have been established and agreed upon from the beginning by both parties.

Competence and Technology as Organizational Resilience

The third article in Table 2 discusses how the involvement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology improves operational efficiency. The fifth article then discusses how a person's non-work experiences are positive. The use of information technology has a major influence on organizations (Heslina & Syahrani, 2021). Information gathered by AI from several sources must still be carefully considered by HRM practitioners (Chowdhury et al., 2024). Related to AI, (Samarasinghe & Medis, 2020) state that the neural system, or the core of an AI-based HRM system in organizations, is HR analysis itself.

The development of a company's capabilities can be grounded in the competencies of each employee (Salman et al., 2020). In fact, the fifth article discusses that experience is needed from the time an individual is still in education. Extracurricular activities at school can serve as a means of applying learning outcomes because the experiences students gain when participating in such activities provide them with concrete experiences, enabling them to examine and connect beliefs with behaviors acquired through learning (Cortellazzo et al., 2021). Identified competencies can be used for professional careers (Ali et al., 2021). HRM plays an important role in sports organizations because the outcomes of HRM divisions are intangible (Tomas, 2020). Skills are beneficial for sport psychologists because sports participants acquire skills and competencies (Ronkainen et al., 2021). Organizations need competent employees to improve performance (Sabuhari et al., 2020).

Planning Is the Key to Club Sustainability

Planning is the initial capital for a club to operate; therefore, human resources who work in planning should naturally have a visionary way of thinking. The scope of HRM now extends to planning and budgeting because human resource projections require substantial costs and this certainly affects long-term plans (C. Udokwu et al., 2023). The second article in Table 2 states that the major problem faced by European clubs concerns human resource limitations, which begin with poor club planning. Planners who can prepare plans properly should not face many problems during operations (Seippel et al., 2023). Workforce planning and employee performance are matters that need to be examined in the human resource division (Alabi et al., 2024). The increasing emphasis on planning in HRM exists because it is the organization's most important asset (Bagheri, 2016).

Leaders of sports organizations are like leaders in other organizations; they must understand the steps of planning, organizing, budgeting, and evaluation (Yarmohammadi-Monfared et al., 2021). HRM systems in all companies are essentially similar (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). This opinion supports supporting evidence that planning, especially human resource planning, will have a major impact over time for organizations, both non-sport and sport organizations. After all, all organizational activities require human resources as the driving force toward organizational goals; therefore, HRM in sport should also follow general HRM scholarship.

Conclusions

Based on the presentation of the results and the discussion above, we note that there are three key points to keep in mind for the future. First, companies need to be thorough in seeking high-quality certifications and must conduct both hard and soft skills tests as the final determining factor. Second, technology should be integrated into the sport's human resources recruitment process. Third and finally, leaders should possess experience that earns the trust of other employees, which will ultimately enhance the integrity of sports human resources as they

follow leaders who also demonstrate good character. Third, planning and accountability form the foundation of a high-quality sport's human resources recruitment process. We recommend further research into how many sports organizations conduct a series of skills tests to validate certifications or administrative data of prospective employees, along with the use of technology in these recruitment processes.

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