HONG KONG 康樂動向
KONG
RECREATION
REVIEW

Volume 33
2021

二〇二一年
第三十三期

HKRMA

Hong Kong Recreation Management Association
香 港 康 樂 管 理 協 會

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An analysis of British Triathlon through Strategic Planning, Sports Development and Sports Delivery

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Introduction

The sport of triathlon is one of the fastest growing sports in the UK with a number of iconic events, vibrant clubs and world-class triathletes with frequent podium finishes around the globe. In 2012, the sport of triathlon was given a huge boost in the UK with the widespread success of the London Olympics. Hundreds of thousands of spectators stretching from Hyde Park to Buckingham Palace cheered as homegrown Alistair and Jonathan Brownlee claimed victory with the gold and bronze medals respectively. The brothers also made Olympic history by being the first siblings to win individual medals in the same event. Triathlon is one of the few events of the London games that is mainly non-ticketed, where anyone can line up the race route to cheer on their favourite triathletes free of charge (Lydall 2012) Beyond the Brownlee brothers which dominates not one but two Olympics, UK based triathletes such as Helen Jenkins, Chrissie Wellington, Tim Don, and Lucy Charles have also became worldwide celebrities for the International Triathlon Union (ITU) or Ironman distance events. Triathlon in the UK is healthy at all levels and gaining popularity among the public. (William 2011)

For the part Strategic Planning, I hope to introduce the *Comprehensive Strategic Management Model*, discuss its strength and weakness and how the British Triathlon "Vision to 2024" plan fit in this model. In the part of Sports Development, I hope to use the *John Eady's Pryamid Model* to explain the sports development of triathlon in the UK. I shall also have a discussion of the macro and micro factors affecting British Triathlon and how it may affect the organization's current or future planning. Additionally, I will look at the unique sports delivery system of British Triathlon that have been admired globally and how it encourages participation of the sport. Finally, I will also provide a S.W.A.T. (Strength/ Weaknesses/ Opportunities/ Threats) analysis of the British Triathlon.

Organization Overview

British Triathlon, a federation whose members comprise of all the associations of Triathlon England, Triathlon Scotland and Welsh Triathlon, the so called "Home Nations". In particular, British Triathlon is responsible for the Great Britain Elite, Paratriathlon and Age-Group triathlon teams, all the British and International triathlon events, the Anti-Doping agencies and the International Representation of the sport. British The British Triathlon Federation is also one of the 32 national sports governing bodies represented in the British Olympic Association and is a member of the European Triathlon Union and the International Triathlon Union

Why long term planning is important

Planning helps an organization chart a course and a common basis for the achievement of its goals. In 2015, British Triathlon launched a comprehensive plan called "Vision to 2024", a collaboration between the Boards of British Triathlon and the Home Nations. The purpose is to set a vision for the sport of triathlon in the UK until 2024. The reason why such as a long term plan, spreading almost nine years, is important is because triathlon is considered an inclusive sport where anyone despite their gender, backgrounds, athletic abilities can participate. The success of the sport of triathlon will greatly depend on all its stakeholders through continuous collaborations. Therefore, an overreaching plan like "Vision to 2024" is essential to provide the underline basis of all the strategies and plans for the British Triathlon Federation and the Home Nation. (Our Triathlon Vision)

Comprehensive Strategic Management Model

There is a Japanese saying that goes, "When you're dying of thirst, it is too late to think about digging a well." This saying highlight the importance of strategic management to any individual or organization (Durden 2018) Strategic management provides a company or an organization such as a sport federation an overall direction and involves specifying its objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve those objectives, and then allocating resources to implement the plans. (Ayitey 2010) Strategic management is also a continuous process that appraises the business and industries in which the organization is involved; appraises its competitors; and fixes goals to meet all the present and future competitor's and then reassesses each strategy.

On November 16, 2015, British Triathlon in partnership with the Home Nation Associations of Triathlon England, Triathlon Scotland, Welsh Triathlon and the Triathlon Trust announced a new comprehensive strategic plan named "Vision to 2024" along with a new visual identity. (British Triathlon Annual Report 2018)

Looking at our chosen model of Comprehensive Strategic Management Model, I believe British Triathlon did use many aspect of this model to create their strategic plan. I will try to adapt the model into the British Triathlon plan in the important 6 stages as mentioned before:

1. The Mission

The mission for British Triathlon is to "deliver world-class success and to inspire participation in the sport between 2017 to 2024"

2. Long Term Objectives

British triathlon in their plans list out 7 strategic goals:

- **Winning Performances**
- **Inspirational Events**
- **Growing Participation**
- **Essential Membership**
- **Top 5 Olympic Sport**
- **Outstanding Governance**
- **International Influence**

(Our Triathlon Vision British Triathlon 2015)

3. Situation Analysis (External/ Internal Audit)

In their annual report, I believe that British Triathlon did use some form of SWAT and PEST analysis in their planning.

For their **strength**, they have highlights some of their important underlying values such as "We are people centred, ambitious, inclusive and do what's right"

In the areas of **"Threats, Political and Economic"**. In their annual report, they list out some of the risks in their future:

Funding

Maintenance of public funding and the inability to achieve self-generated revenue targets.

Political

Changes in the regulatory or political environment affecting the company's ability to deliver its strategy and objectives.

Events

Failure to secure major events may adversely affect the company's ability to build the profile of and participation in the sport. Failure to secure event sponsorship may adversely affect the company's ability to deliver major events, which may affect the company's ability to build the profile of and participation in the sport. (British Triathlon Annual Report 2018)

4. Generate, Evaluate and Select Strategies

I believe British Triathlon in comping up with the 7 long term objectives, it has taken a thorough analysis of the environment, its competition and also its own strength and weakness. For example, in their annual report, it says it will leverage major events such as the ITU World Triathlon Leeds to deliver member benefits in which they believe will inspire participation, which is one of their long-term goals. (British Triathlon Annual Report 2018)

5. Implementation of Strategies

I believe British Triathlon since 2015 has implemented these strategies well and from their 2018 annual report's section called "Roll of Honor", it highlight all the major victories British triathlon teams have gathered. From Olympics, to Paralympic to Age-group athletes all showing successful "Winning Performance" which is of their major long term goals.

6. Measure & Evaluate

I believe British Triathlon have done this part well as

it can be easily seen in a number of areas in their strategic plan highlighting the need for self-review, self-evaluation and performance measurement and make sure the strategy is aligned between the Home Nations:

"The Board of Directors for British Triathlon are committed to growing the sport. In 2015, the company developed its strategy for the sport in the UK until 2024. Three years on, and with some significant strides forward, the time feels right to review and evolve the strategy."

"The Executive Team maintain a risk register which is reviewed on quarterly basis by the Board. Risks are identified along with the necessary mitigation strategies." (British Triathlon Annual Report 2018)

Triathlon England (Part of British Triathlon) has a similar approach which requires the organization to monitor the progress against the goals via an annual scorecard and the management will report to the Board on a quarterly basis and action plans and budgets will be aligned to the annual scorecard.

In sum, I believe the **Comprehensive Strategic Management Model** fits British Triathlon well. This model allows the federation to step back from the day to day operations of the Home Nation committees and look at a bigger picture of what makes triathlon successful in the UK. It uses SWOT and PEST analysis to explore its strength and upcoming threats or risks, then come up together with a plan e.g. (Vision 2024) with a good structured framework that can enable understanding from all stakeholders within the Home Nations.

In addition, the built-in progress measurement mechanism of the model also allows British Triathlon to easily observe if their plan is making solid sustainable progress or if they need to needed adjustments.

Sports Development Model

Sports development is about providing and improving opportunities for people to participate in sport at different level. John Eady in his book "*Practical Sports Development*" further defines sports development as the process which enhances opportunities for people of all ages, degrees of interest and levels of ability to take part, get better and excel in their chosen sporting activities. (Watt) Over the years, models have been developed to help improve existing strategic sports planning. For instance, John Eady came up with a Pyramid Model which evolves into 3 version from modification over time.

I would like to use John Eady's Pyramid Model 3 as illustrate below and how I think the British Triathlon is following a similar model.
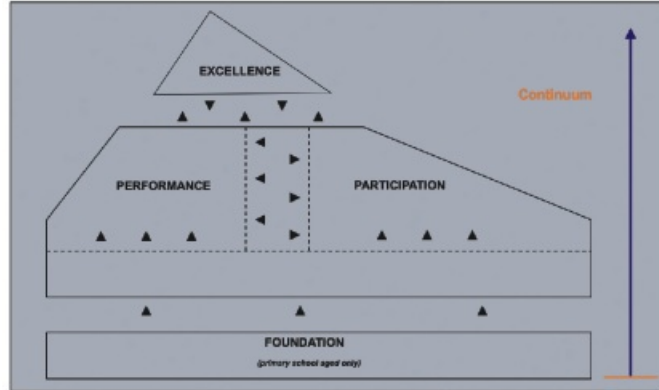
In this model, we can make a few observations:

1. Foundation is the base of the pyramid which involves the crucial first steps of youngsters (e.g. primary school children) learning basic movement needed for the sports of triathlon. Triathlon activities such as swimming and cycling can involve a lot of motor skills and muscle memories is better learned when one is young. In this level, a lot of playing maybe done at schools and it is usually informal.

2. Participation is one level up from Foundation, and involves doing exercise as one's leisure or fun, taking part in sport for health, fitness, or together with friends or a steam. In the UK, anyone interested in triathlon can participates in triathlon clubs and young adults (Age 11-16) can also participate something called "Regional Skills School" to learn new skills, have fun and meet other young triathletes.


3. Performance is also linked to the level of Participation since more participation should naturally lead to one's higher proficiency of triathlon which equals to better performance.

In the UK triathlon, we can say there are different performance level and depending on one's age and sports skill levels. For example, there are **Regional Academies** (Age 14-19) the first performance focus institutions designed to help more serious triathletes to get into a higher level. The next level is **Home Nation Talents** (Age 16-19), squads that contain the best young triathlete from each of the Home Nation. Then came **Podium Potential** who are elite triathletes with around 8 years or closer to the Podium level.

4. Excellence is reaching the top of the pyramid and involves accomplishing nationally and publicly recognized standards of performance. For British Triathlons, the cream of the top squads is called the **Podium**, they are best of the best, metal winning triathletes representing the whole of UK.

As British Triathlons explains that there road triathlon excellence is not always one straight line. Therefore, we can see from the model the up and down arrows from **Participation, Performance, Excellence** shows the different directions individuals can take within the system which also illustrates how individuals can move up and down the system and choose the path that is right for the individual.

Below we can see a similar non-linear approach from British Triathlon's athlete development framework which they called **Performance Pathway** (see below) The framework focuses on developing more than just swim, bike and run as they hope to create independent learners and problem solvers, athletes capable of consistently making the right decisions at the right time no matter the level of expectation.
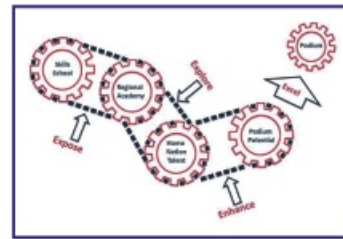
In sum, I think the Eady's Pyramid Model 3 is a good fit for the British Triathlon. The framework in regards to **Participation, Performance, Excellence** is relatively easy to understand.

Sport Delivery System

Triathlon is an ambitious, inclusive sport and the development of a comprehensive, easy to understand **Sports Delivery System** is crucial to bring the sports to the people of the UK. As mentioned in the sport development model, British Triathlon utilize a framework called **Performance Pathway**. The framework is designed around a set of principles which attach to the British Triathlon's core values on talent development and coaching practices. Unlike other traditional triathlete training programs, the whole framework focuses on developing more than just swim, bike and run but more important, create independent learners and problem solvers, triathletes capable of consistently making the right decisions at the right time
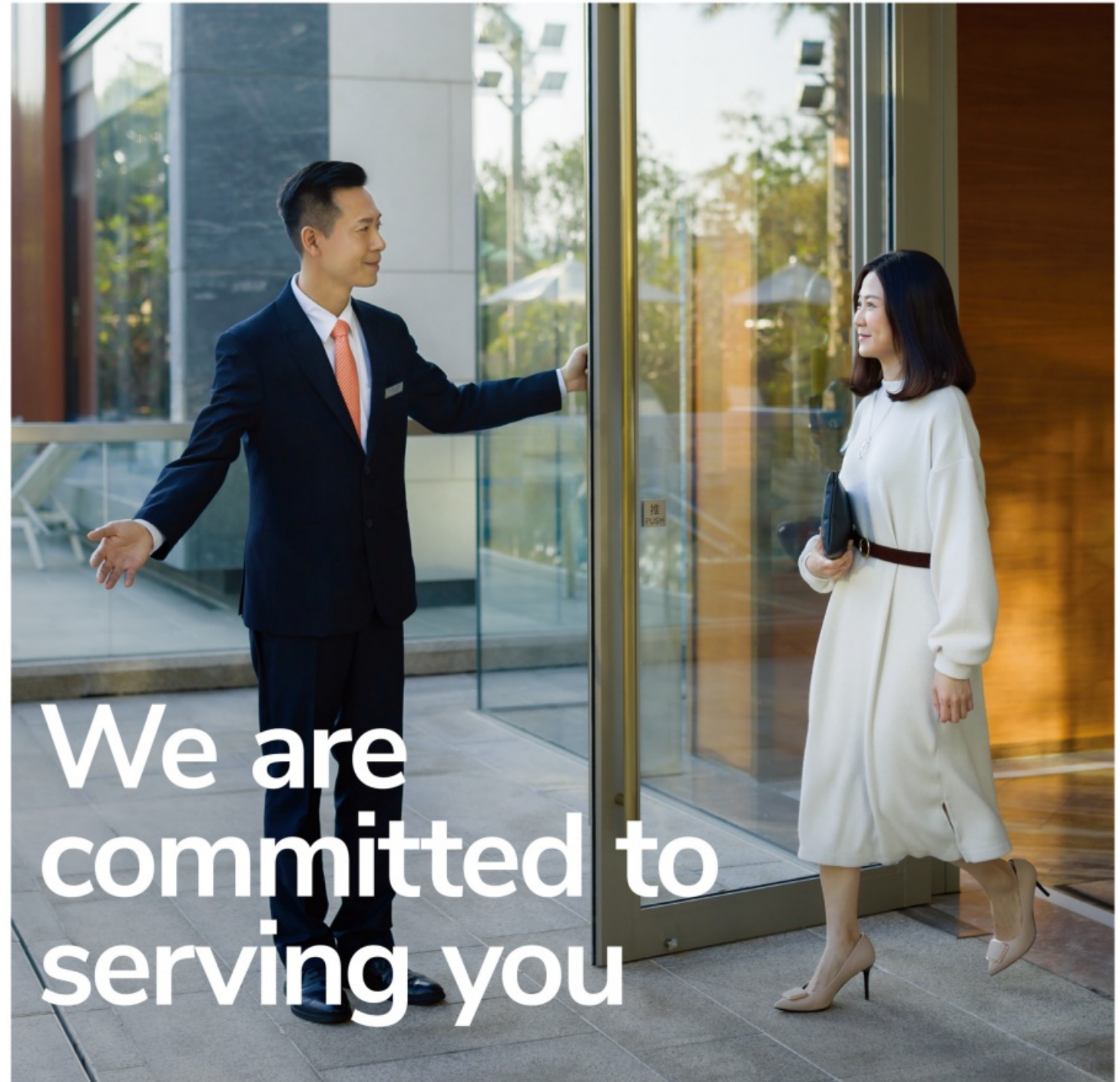
despite the different level of expectation. (Athlete Development Framework)

There are 5 steps in the *Performance Pathway* in the UK system:

**1. Skills School** is about developing independent learners and having fun, it is a blend of all that is best about both the performance and participation arms of the sport

2. Regional Academy is the first purely performance focused step and is for athletes from the ages of 13 to 19. There are 13 Academies across Britain: 1 in Scotland, 2 in Wales and 10 in England

3. Home Nation Talent, these squads contain the best developing triathletes of each Home Nation

4. Podium Potential a world class program funded by the UK Sport and contains athlete who are around 8 years or closer away from the podium

5. Podium itself is where our very best athletes reside – it is for true World leading medal winning athletes
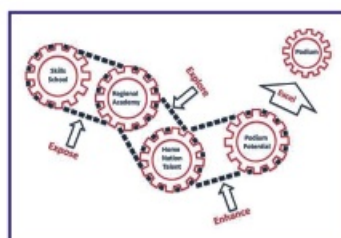

(Athlete Development Framework)

Within the these 5 steps in the Pathway, British Triathlon also utilize the philosophy of 4 E's in Excellence which include "**Expose**" the young triathletes at Skills Schools and Regional Academies to the sport. "**Explore**" with problem solving through the Regional Academies and Home Nation Talent. "**Enhance**" the process of refining and improving performance at the Home Nation Talent to the Podium Potential level. Finally, "**Excel**" at the Podium level to enable the athletes to do their very best. The 4 E's not only describe a learning cycle for the athlete at each age and stage to experience but also depict the journey an athlete takes through the Pathway too. This guiding principles link and connect all the "gears" of the whole Pathway training system together.

Finally, what sets the British Triathlon's Sport Delivery apart from systems from other countries are the 6 Pillars in their athlete development and coaching practices which I believe is one of the key reasons why British Triathlon has been successful and dominating in the in the sport the past decade.

TRAINING AS PLAY	learning to love training
INFORMED CHOICE	learning to make great decisions with good information
LEARNING TO LEAD	learning to take ownership of your journey
INTELLIGENT TRAINING	learning to train with clear purpose and clarity
INTELLIGENT RACING	learning to make winning decisions in racing
ONE DAY ONE RACE	learning to deliver your best when it really matters

I feel the Sport Delivery system of British Triathlon *"Athlete Development Framework"* is very structure, rational, practical and effective in delivering long term success. Through the 5 steps of the *Performance Pathways,* it is embedded with their 6 pillars principles. And the stakeholders (athletes, coaches, parents) in each level knows what is to be expected and what's need to be achieved. (as illustrated below)
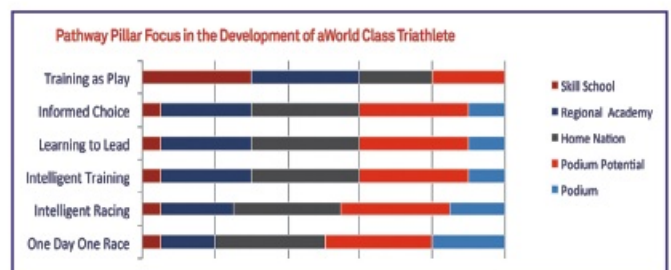
The system also addresses many current issues of the sports including athlete psychology, over-training, and informed decision makings. The mission of British Triathlon is to "deliver world class success and to inspire participation" and after reviewing the strategic plan and athlete development framework in detail, I can understand why it has been so effective in producing many triathlon success stories in the UK and also admired by other countries.

Appendix 1
S.W.O.T. Analysis (British Triathlon)

Strength	Weakness
S1. Considered one of the top 5 'not for profit' sports in the UK	W1. For men podium elites, the Brownlee is overshadowed other athletes and taken most of the attention (as show in British Triathlon own plan documents, only Brownlees are featured) Its hard to find any rising stars mentioned like Alex Yee who won the world cup triathlon and 10,000 meters run at 27 mins
S2. Funding agencies and government/local authorities desire to work with triathlon as priority sport.	
S3. Good governance and board	
S4. Well known triathlon celebrities are from the UK	W2. Olympic result hopeful is depending too much on the Brownlees brothers
S5. Good result from both age- group and Olympic/Paralympic performance	
S6. Good facilities to develop triathlons all year round	
S7. Many scholarship, foundations, trusts available supporting UK triathletes	
Opportunity	**Threat**
O1. Growth of mainstream media coverage in Triathlon with events like ITU World Triathlon, Ironman race, etc.	T1. Government funding cuts
O2. Increase of fans through rise of social medias (FB, IG, Twitter)	T2. BREXIT cause industry brands to decrease sponsorship
O3. Rise of overall memberships = more funding	T3. Extreme weathers may lead to race cancelations
O4. Rise of woman in triathlon	T4. Other countries like Australia are copying the successful UK system of de-centralized trainings and can lead to bigger competitions
O5. New addition of Mixed Teams Relay, the 3rd triathlon race in Tokyo Olympics besides Men and Women. More games = more attention and sponsorship and participation	
O6. International opportunities with collaboration with other triathlon unions like USA Triathlons, etc,	

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Health Benefits of Leisure Responses during COVID 19

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Introduction

All nations have been forced to cope with the COVID 19 pandemic in varying degrees (Bond, 2020). As of March 2021, there have been 29,229, 162 million people infected with COVID 19 and 531,766 deaths in the United States alone (CDC, 2021). According to Bond (2020), the virus has been "malignant, stealthy, elusive and highly infectious." Immobilizing, puzzling, and testing our resilience to fear, panic and uncertainty, communities have struggled with how to respond to this crisis. During this 21st century paradigm shift, people have continued to seek ways to maintain their wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. As with any long-term viral epidemic people also worry about family, self and neighbors developing symptoms (Wahl, 2020).

The past year the COVID 19 virus has disrupted all major life events. The pandemic has created dramatic economic loss and confined us to our homes through shelter in place initiatives. These actions have affected the livelihood of the planet and have resulted in global stress and trauma within the human psyche (Brose, 2020; Behar-Zusman, 2020; Majali et al., 2021; Bond, 2020; Zenker et al., 2020). As our global public health crisis has progressed, we have learned much about social divisions, cohesion, and change (Giles, 2020). The American Journal of Managed Care (2020) notes the pandemic began January of 2020, and resulted in travel bans, and a global and public health emergency response.

Perhaps one of the greatest individual and collective factors originating from the pandemic has been the way work and play lifestyles have been impacted. Without question there has been an expansion of outdoor and home-based leisure and far less collective or group activities. These changes are having a direct impact on leisure behaviors and attitudes of individuals resulting in new and different patterns of living. Further new employment patterns have reshaped how people live and how work is interfaced with leisure.

The purpose of this article is to discuss leisure and the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. The paper is divided into several component parts. The first section of the paper presents challenges to an individual's mental health during the time of the current pandemic, along with the benefits of leisure. Next, the paper explores a variety of leisure activities such as home-based leisure and outdoor heritage tourism that have been engaged in during the pandemic to support the wellbeing of individuals. Last, the paper provides valuable insights from two leisure-oriented agencies and settings that have been affected and/or addressed program issues related to COVID-19.

Mental Health and the Pandemic

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (World Health Organization, 2005). Pfefferbaum & North (2020) explore mental health and the uncertainties of living within the constraints of a pandemic, as impacting an individual's mental health through emotional isolation,

insecurity, stigma, and confusion. COVID 19 mental health stressors included school closures, business closures, deficient resources for medical response, economic loss, strain on medical professionals and essential workers, and impositions of personal freedoms.

During the first wave of the virus 3 billion people were quarantined world-wide (Xiao, 2020). Unique circumstances of social distancing have specifically impacted families (Behar-Zusman et al., (2020). Families confined in limited spaces for prolonged periods of time often intensify existing conflict and stress (Behar-Zusman, 2020). "High levels of conflictive interactions in the family contribute to a potentially toxic environment which serves as a stressor that interacts with, and exacerbates, the negative effects of major stressful life events" (Avison, 2010; Behar-Zusman, 2020). Social distancing, isolation, and spacing constraints have caused a significant disruption in habits, routines. Many people throughout the world have developed a low level of perceived social control and self-concept. As a global phenomenon, the virus has caused a maladjustment of our social organizations, as well as our overall emic functioning; that is, functioning within our cultural context and focus. (Behar-Zusman et al., 2020; Bond, 2020; Brose, 2020).

A greater propensity for psychological problems and posttraumatic stress has also been found in young people during the COVID 19 pandemic. Pressing research suggests that the pandemic has extensively impacted the social life and friend relationships of young people (Branquinho et al., 2020; Liang et al., 2020). During social restrictions and lockdowns, a study by Branquinho et al. (2020) measured psychological responses and mental health values in youth. Results of the study reported "higher

levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Wang et al., 2020; Branquinho et al., 2020; Krause et al., 2020).

Adolescents also reported a loss of interpersonal relationships, decrease in personal skills, increased distrust, procrastination, interruption in physical activity, and a disruption of daily routines, among other difficulties (Wang et al., 2020; Branquinho et al., 2020; Krause et al., 2020). Among youth there was great apprehension, worry, confusion, irritability, insomnia, and weight disruptions, along with higher screen time and fatigue (Branquinho et al., 2020). Research has demonstrated that community networks are important and "social isolation can have long-term negative outcomes" at any age (Berg-Weger and Morley 2020; Anastasiou, 2021). Long-term isolation due to quarantine can cause post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and demoralization (Brooks et al. 2020; Anastasiou, 2021)).

The increased burden on mental health along with reduced social interaction and quarantine have forced people to adapt to a world with limited leisure such as shopping, sports participation, and tourism (Krause, et al., 2020). Increased time indoors has also led to a reduction in UV radiation and Vitamin D deficiencies, as well as increased risk factors for developing the COVID 19 virus (Bleizgys, 2020).

Benefits of Leisure During the Pandemic

Our expressive culture, that is our behaviors and beliefs related to art, leisure, and play matter more today than ever (Miller, 2009). The COVID 19 crisis response

has in many ways brought out the best in humanity, as individuals struggle to define new interpretations of work, art, leisure, play and family connections and friendships (Shahidi et al., 2020). Leisure and leisure networks not only promote physical and mental health but help to harmonize family relationships which is crucial during COVID 19 lockdowns (Ling, 2020). Our daily behaviors are rooted "structurally and relationally" in our social relationships as well as our experiences of leisure (Bond, 2020). The pandemic has led to an increase in the value of, and strength of, friendships and interaction with families (Branquinho et al., 2020)

The pandemic has especially imparted a core lesson in understanding kinship networks and has given many people a reason to reunite with family and friend groups (Shahidi et al., 2020; Roberts, 2020; Stodolska, 2020). Leisure has been instrumental in providing a network of support for people during the crisis (Barre, 2020). We have in many ways witnessed the cultural loss of leisure of the past. Leisure essential to our social commentary has been dramatically altered and modified to align with our existing pandemic culture. People within this paradigm have come up with a new "leisure voice" and creative ways to manage, construct, and develop new leisure narratives (Mukherjee, 2020; Stodolska, 2020). Leisure as a means, has contributed to post conflict reconciliation and healing.

Edginton and Chin (2014), suggest that leisure is not only valuable in constructing quality of life for people, but a necessary social movement for our health and wellbeing (Barre, 2020). Leisure activities are generally meant to uplift a person, to help them relax and enjoy freedom from everyday stressors and workplace activities. Caldwell (2005) describes leisure as "restorative and beneficial" in that it moves one towards better overall health and wellness.

The systemic shock of lockdowns and social restrictions has had a significant impact on physical activity (Young, 2020). To combat sedentary behaviors, people have adjusted their physical literacy and activity to

include outdoor leisure pursuits such as running, cycling, and walking streets, beaches, parks, and green spaces while mindful of large gatherings (Young, 2020; Barre, 2020). Many Asian countries are also participating in outdoor leisure activities which present a lower health risk (Shin, 2020).

Physical activity along with contact with green spaces, parks, and nature has been shown to have positive mental and physical health benefits. Zhou et al. (2020) discusses the use of outdoor leisure spaces as common in China during the pandemic, along with finding alternative ways to use leisure time. Slater et al. (2020), note that "engaging in regular physical activity is protective against poor cardiovascular health, obesity, hypertension, and diabetes, which are shown as risk factors for COVID-19."

Homebound Leisure and the Pandemic

In addition to physical fitness, the cultural leisure landscape has been transformed. Given the lack of indoor community spaces for people to gather during the pandemic, Dieser (2020) has recommended adopting a "homebound optimal leisure style" to include "at least one serious leisure activity (expressing special skills over a period), supplemented by casual and project-based leisure." Around the world creative activities such as zooming book clubs and various networks, arts and crafts, gardening, reading, sewing, baking, cooking, listening to podcasts, online theater, and concerts, adopting animals, internet programming, dancing, online shopping, backyard staycations, and even virtual music lessons have helped to fill leisure time (Young, 2020; Shahidi et al., 2020; Stoldoska, 2020). A renewed interest in homebound leisure has been essential in maintaining mental and physical health. In countries such as Korea, "Corona Home Training," which involves activities that can be implemented alone, have become popular (Lee, 2020).

Advancements in digital technologies, mobiles and the internet have also led to increases in virtual leisure. Youth
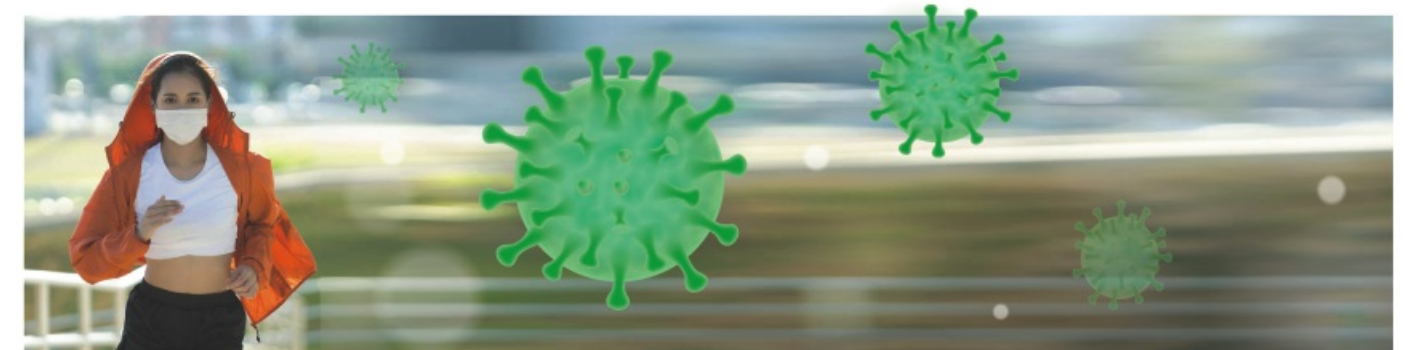
have engaged in longer periods of screen time, playing video games, streaming movies, and participating on social media. Many youth and teens participate in online programming such as Tik Tok, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Kik, GroupMe and Houseparty. Today, youth in America spend more time using media than sleeping (Roberts et al., 2008). Krause et al. (2020), suggests that the pandemic has reshaped the landscape with media consumption and the way it impacts life satisfaction and wellbeing. Studies have shown that listening to music as a coping strategy provided significant benefits over television, social media, and live streaming (Krause et al., 2020). Music, which is low cost and can be accomplished individually, has been an important part of modifying our leisure behavior.

Heritage Tourism and the Pandemic

Social distancing, mandated restrictions, travel bans, and border closings aimed at limiting the spread of the virus, have resulted in a variety of closures, curfews, and regulations that have affected indoor museums, theaters, outdoor or natural venues, shopping centers, heritage tourist sites and other cultural and natural spaces (Wahl, 2020; Landry, 2020; Shahidi et al., 2020; Stodolska, 2020; Karabulut et al., 2020). International and domestic visitors have been forced to postpone or cancel visits to popular cultural and recreation sites. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) between January and October, the number of 2020 international tourist arrivals fell by 72% throughout the world with "900 million fewer international tourist arrivals." These forecasts suggest a US$ 2 trillion-dollar loss in the global GDP. Tourist destinations are "interconnected system[s] of businesses" within a region and may impact

numerous dynamics within a community (Qiu et al., 2020; Gossling, et al, 2006). Domestic tourism in many countries like the United States is making a slow recovery with virus containment, but there remains lower consumer confidence (UNWTO, 2020).

COVID 19 outcomes have also included mass cancellations or postponements of sporting events such as the Tokyo Summer Olympics, the Boston Marathon, International Formula One racing and the temporary closure of international and domestic theme parks such as Disneyland (Shahidi et al., 2020). In the United States, tourist destinations such as Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite National Park and the Mount Rushmore National Memorial have been severely impacted by the pandemic, with a decrease in tourist participation. Not only are these important recreational sites, but tourism demand is a vital industry both locally and nationally that creates jobs, revenues and boosts the GDP (Lee et al., 2020). Some ecological improvements during the pandemic have taken place, including a dramatic reduction in carbon emissions (Mousazadeh et al, 2021).

In the wake of COVID 19, many families looked to outdoor vacation destinations that were local and/or other end destinations in the country that could be accomplished safely following masking and social distancing guidelines. During the summer of 2020, many families and residents in the United States traveled via automobile to places like Mount Rushmore National Memorial, which immortalizes the faces of four U.S. presidents in granite. Nestled in the famous Black Hills of the state of South Dakota, USA this popular end destination is a tourist attraction for many individuals Home to the Mount Rushmore National Memorial and the Crazy Horse Memorial, as well
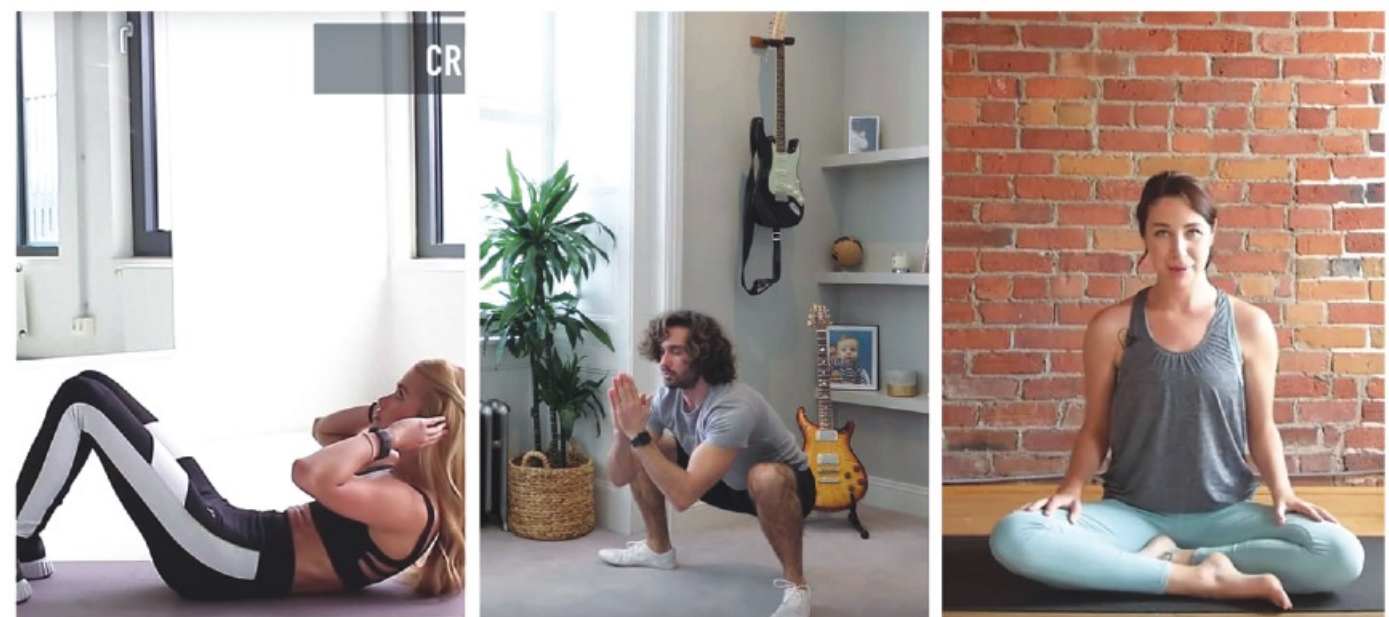
numerous other attractions, the state of South Dakota has historically attracted millions of tourists annually.

Typically, a host to three million visitors from around the globe each year, Mount Rushmore Memorial has become a destination symbolizing America's freedom, history, and culture (National Park Service, 2021). For visitors to Mount Rushmore during the COVID 19 pandemic, masks were required in all Federal buildings and on all Federal lands, where social distancing could not be maintained. Sculpture illumination hours were continued throughout evenings at sunset, while the Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center, memorial grounds, sculptor's studio, and parking were all made available to tourists (National Park Service, 2020). Hundreds of tourists socially distanced themselves as they strolled under Mount Rushmore's avenue of the flags, situated at the base of the Presidential sculpture.

Nearby at Custer State Park also located in South Dakota, USA is a beautiful natural landscape with its historic rolling green hills, ranges, and exceptional and abundant wildlife. As one of the nation's largest national parks, covering 71,000 acres Custer State Park also has remained open (Custer State Park, 2021). Like many state and national parks, Custer maintained social distancing guidelines and recommended masking in buildings, restaurants, lodges, and shops (Custer State Park, 2021). Most tourists were able to remain in their cars and navigate through the grasslands and forests driving the 18-mile wildlife loop to view herds of bison, burros, and pronghorn. Tourists also had opportunities to hike, bike, swim, birdwatch, canoe, kayak, camp, or fish within the park limits. Other parks in the U.S. limited the number of people who could utilize trails, campgrounds, picnic

areas, lodging and restaurants. In many ways, there has been more time for leisure in pursuits of a different form, and we have seen an increase in some outdoor pursuits which are perceived as safer and of less personal risk (Landry, 2020).

The Response of Selected Community Organizations to the Pandemic

In spring of 2020, the governor of the state of Iowa implemented temporary measures to close recreational facilities, while allowing flexibility to state agencies in "responding to the unprecedented COVID-19 situation." This decision was also supported by the critical work of the public health office of Iowa (Office of the Governor of Iowa, 2020). The closing of recreational facilities presented many challenges for its organizations and facilities across the state.

The Cedar Valley SportsPlex is a multi-dimensional fitness facility operated by the City of Waterloo, Iowa, USA that was developed with private donations. The SportsPlex attends to its commitment of providing current and diverse programming and fitness opportunities to enhance life-long health and well-being of our members, residents, businesses, and guests (Cedar Valley SportsPlex, 2021).

Serving the population of the Cedar Valley of varying ages, the SportsPlex has offered programs such as youth sports, fitness classes, pickleball, senior programs, basketball, aquatics, karate, massage therapy and facility rentals. As a multi-level facility, it offers a large pool and water slide, a fieldhouse where many athletes play football, soccer, and other sports, two fitness studios, an indoor track, a basketball court, a pickleball court, multi-purpose rooms, indoor play facility for children, and several cardio workout machines, weight machines and free weights for a small membership fee.

The pandemic directly affected the SportsPlex and its programming in a multitude of ways, including adjusting its program design and schedule to accommodate its active members. In doing so, the facility and staff examined the most suitable way to address the pandemic, while still maintaining the health and physical needs of its participants in a safe and secure environment that operated under strict

state guidelines. Although the SportsPlex was temporarily closed, staff were asked to consider, and develop, innovative alternatives for creating and communicating health and wellness opportunities to its fitness members. The Director of the facility allowed 400 active participants to freeze their memberships to defer personal cost.

When classes resumed at the SportsPlex several adjustments were made to ensure the safety of its members. Face masks became mandatory for participating members during all sport and health activities. Sanitizing stations were added to the facility, as well as additional personnel to clean regularly. In addition, 6-foot boundaries demarcated all exercise class areas. For example, in spin classes, exercise bikes were spaced 6 feet apart to maintain social distancing. Many of the classes at the SportsPlex were taught by fitness instructors and took place using zoom technology. Furthermore, the staff sent out texts to members that included healthy recipes and workouts that could be done indoors or outside in open spaces. The SportsPlex worked collaboratively with area hospitals. Once distribution of the vaccine began, the facility became a location site to obtain the COVID 19 vaccination.

The impact of the pandemic also has had a significant impact on the Family YMCA of Black Hawk County, in Cedar Falls, Iowa, USA. As a direct result of the pandemic, the YMCA became a supportive epicenter for essential workers in the community. The closing of the YMCA facility by the governor of Iowa, not only interrupted its core delivery services such as before and after school programs, but staff along with members struggled to adjust. The closing of schools affected the overall

operational budget and the entire department of YMCA before and after school programs was lost. Fitness programs and membership also faced significant risk.

Two organizational goals that became mandatory during the onset of the pandemic where as follows: 1) secure and ensure funding for the facility, and 2) respond to community needs by providing emergency childcare for school age children of essential workers such as those working in healthcare, the food supply chain, government infrastructure, as well as single parent families required to continue working to support their families.

During this timeframe, the YMCA faced many uncertainties and challenges. For example, establishing safety guidelines along with a safe environment through social distancing, and sanitation became a priority. Concerns involved inability to acquire the necessary supplies to maintain protocols for a secure environment. The organization also facilitated a community-wide coalition along with the local Child Care Resource and Referral and local community districts to ensure the childcare infrastructure for the community was functional.

This initiative involved childcare providers, essential personnel, and local legislators, and resulted in the creation of a Steering Committee, Employee-Provider Connection Team and Provider Team. Another program that was implemented to meet the demands of school age children at home was called Kids Quest. Kids Quest curated theme-based activities that could be picked up by the parent and included arts, crafts and creative play for children and families at home. Kids Quest also included a

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mix of weekly STEM, music, arts, and literacy programs that challenged families by offering reward badges for completion. Special online "live' experiences included local tours of the University of Northern Iowa Botanical Center and a mini concert series. Challenges to programming included competition with the saturation of online sources.

Another issue identified by the organization was food distribution and food insecurity throughout the community to those in need. The YMCA collaborated with the Northeast Iowa Food Bank of Waterloo, Iowa USA and distributed food packages to children and seniors, along with prescription pick up services as well as offering wellness checks for seniors. Despite losing revenue the YMCA, under strict safety guidelines continued to keep its doors open to provide community services. Many of its services were offered at a discount rate for those facing financial difficulties because of the pandemic.

There was a $500,000 decrease in revenue over the year. As a result, fiscal goals in the organization have changed which are reflected in budgeting. New sources of revenue, such as garnering grants, securing private donations and analyzing operational costs to reduce expenses have been current goals of the YMCA administration and leadership.

Today, the YMCA organization is spending more income on supplies to ensure a safe environment and less on direct staffing to support childcare. Additional support from the community through multiple funders and grants has also helped to stabilize costs of the facility and programming. Many YMCA families and members continued to pay their fees although services were suspended, and over $122,000 was donated to the local organization by outside supporters. In the face of COVID 19, the YMCA is adapting and modifying its ambitions and services by restructuring and eliminating staffing and reducing equipment resources. The overall goal remains integrity and stewardship to its local community.

Concluding Comments

As the authors of this article suggest, mental health has been significantly affected because of the pandemic. The social stress of COVID 19 has affected people of every facet of the global society. Leisure has become an important support for individuals at this time, providing emotional health and well-being. Leisure has also been forced to undergo a significant transformation and new leisure narratives have evolved to fit within the COVID 19 paradigm. Innovative adaptations include creative home-based leisure, outdoor activities, along with

heritage tourism which can be accomplished using COVID 19 guidelines and may be considered safer. Furthermore, sports and fitness organizations and facilities such as the YMCA and SportsPlex of Iowa have adapted to meet the needs of their members and the community during this crisis.

A perspective on pre-pandemic leisure can be gained by reviewing observations of leisure time as discussed by Robinson and Godby (1997), Shore (1992) and Thompson (1967). Robinson and Godbey (1997) referenced the idea of "time deepening," and suggested that we were part of a culture that seems to pack more activities into smaller time frames. Shore (1992) discussed the decline of leisure and the notion that Americans had been feeling "squeezed for time," and that this construct of time was detrimental to our overall wellbeing. Thompson (1967) noted that "Time has become a currency that we spend instead of pass."

Barre (2020), commenting on leisure within the timeframe of the pandemic, suggests that our understanding of the construct of leisure time has been challenged and modified during the COVID19 pandemic. With the restructuring of the work environment many people have found themselves with additional free time and the potential for leisure. This new reality has given people the opportunity to "slow down," take a break from our demanding work culture, reframe our cultural tempo and to return to the importance of community and connection (Barre, 2020).

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Pickleball: A New Dynamic Sport

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Introduction

If you have not yet heard of it nor played it already, now is the time to become familiar with the game of "pickleball". This new low impact game has developed a large following in North America and is rapidly expanding world-wide.

Invented in the summer of 1965 by a group of families in state of Washington, USA (USA Pickleball 2020a), pickleball combines elements of ping pong, racquetball, handball, tennis, badminton. The rules of the game and the dynamics of the ball combine to simultaneously provide a challenging and vigorous experience for competitive players and a pleasurable experience for recreational players. Pickleball is easy to understand and can be enjoyed by those new to the sport. The game is well-liked for its social nature and its ability to provide enjoyable physical activity.

The purpose of this article is to provide information regarding the game of pickleball and current play. The article will define the term pickleball, its rules and equipment, game play, and court dimensions. The article will also discuss the history of the game and provide an understanding of its path of expansion across the world.

What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is a creative combination of the elements of several games. It uses a court the size of badminton, a net similar to tennis, paddles like ping pong, and a whiffle-like ball. It can be played as singles (a total of two players), doubles (a total of four players), 3 per side in a configuration known as Mortimer, or 6 per side in an intense multi-player configuration, though singles and doubles are most often played.

Rules and Equipment

The equipment needed to play pickleball is minimal. In addition to a court (hard surfaced, with a net like tennis, one third the size of a tennis court), a pickleball paddle for each of the 2 or 4 players, and a hard plastic pickleball are the only gear needed to play. Competitions, such as those organized by USA Pickleball, require players to play with racquets approved by the governing organization (USA Pickleball 2021a). Pickleball paddles have grips like tennis racquets and are made of graphite or composite material, approximately half-way between racquetball rackets and ping pong paddles in size. Pickleballs are approximately the same size as whiffle balls, hollow, made of plastic, have holes and are designed for either indoor or outdoor play. Players wear comfortable clothing and athletic shoes in order to play the game.

Pickleball's official rules were first published in 1984 (USAPA 2020a) and reviewed, amended and re-published in 2005. A competitive play rule book and a more casual Alternative Rule book were issued in 2021 (USAPA 2021a). Changes in rules are a reflection of the constant development of the sport. Shortly after its formation in 2010, the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) adopted the USA Pickleball Association rulebook, with permission from USA Pickleball Association, opening the game to international play (IFP 2021).

Game Play

The ball is served underhand from behind the baseline diagonally across the court, either with or without a preliminary bounce. Only the serving side may score a point. A "two bounce" exchange (one bounce on each side, the side receiving the service and the party receiving the first hit after the serve) initiates each exchange, then players may volley (hit the ball, one hit per side, without bouncing). Paddles are used to direct the speed and path of the ball. The game moves moderately quickly (at a pace fast enough to be challenging, but not so fast as to be discouraging) due to the dynamics of the ball. Pickleball does not allow charging or spiking at the net, as players are not allowed to step into the non-volley zone unless the ball has bounced there (USAPA 2021a). The non-volley zone is defined by a line seven feet from the net. Players refer to the non-volley area as the "kitchen".

While the ball is allowed to bounce once on a side (and required to do so on both sides of the net following the serve) and the ball is often volleyed between players with or without hitting the ground afterward. Play continues until a team does not successfully return the ball, a player steps out of bounds while hitting the ball, or a player touches the net. Upon completion of the volley, the players typically spend a moment congratulating each other on game moves, recall positive aspects of the play, and/or exchange in social banter (especially in doubles). Serves are underhand. Only the serving team can win a point. A game is played to 11 points and the winning team must be ahead by at least 2 points. At the end of the game, pickleball players typically converge to congratulate one another, and touch paddle handles rather than shake hands. This practice, however, has been largely discontinued upon the onset of the COVID-19 virus.

Facilities

The pickleball court is 20 feet by 44 feet for both doubles and singles play, as is a doubles badminton court. The pickleball net is 36 inches high at the center and of the same or similar construction in tennis, pulled to 34 inches in the center. The court is striped like a badminton court, but the serving line is 22 feet (7 inches further) from the net. The non-volley zone extends 7 feet from the net on either side and is marked by mid-court line.

Pickleball is played indoors, typically on wood floors (basketball courts) or outdoors. Soft paved surfaces such as asphalt are preferred over concrete, as it is less physically demanding (yet less durable). Pickleball is not played on grass, as ball bounces are a main component of the game and the ball does not bounce on grass. A tennis court can be used to play both tennis or pickleball. The simplest way to convert a tennis court to a pickleball court is to lower the tennis net to 34" in the center, and tape or paint lines on the court for pickleball. Two tennis courts can be permanently converted into 8 pickleball courts (Pickleball Central 2014). While pickleball play first begins at tennis courts in a community, local public parks and recreation departments are being encouraged by citizens and citizen groups to construct pickleball courts and/or modify existing tennis facilities to accommodate pickleball. For example, the Prescott Pickleball Association of Prescott, Arizona USA encouraged the City of Prescott to expand access to the game with its Pickleball Strategic Plan (Prescott Pickleball Association 2018).

Tournaments

Pickleball is enjoyed in both recreational and competitive play. In 2009, USA Pickleball hosted over 400 players in divisions for all ages at its first National Pickleball Tournament in Buckeye, Arizona. In 2019, the Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships drew more than 2,000 registered pickleball players and distributed more than $80,000 in prize money, the largest cash purse in the history of the sport (USA Pickleball National Championships 2019). The largest pickleball tournaments currently are the US Open Pickleball Championships (usopenpickleballchampionship.com), U.S Pickleball National Championships (usapickleball.org), and the International Federation of Pickleball's Brainbridge Cup. Other competitions are organized by World Team Pickleball (worldteampickleball.com), Huntsman World Senior Games (seniorgames.net), and the Super Senior International Pickleball Association (www.ssipa-pb.org). The World Pickleball Championships (worldpickleballchampionship.com) sponsored by Pickleball Global and USA Pickleball's International Championships provide the forum to determine the world's best each year. Currently, the world's top players hail from the United States and Canada (BackCourt 2020).

History of Pickleball

Two stories explain the origination of the game's name. A group of original players claim the game was named after the pickle boat in rowing crew (a popular sport in the state of Washington). In crew, the pickle boat was typically the boat operated by a hodgepodge of mixed talents, just as pickleball is a jumble of several already-established games. Others claim the game was named after a family dog named Pickles, who enjoyed retrieving game balls, however, sources point out that the dog came on the scene in 1967, two years after the claimed birth of the game (USAPA 2015a). No matter its origin, the name well reflects the levity, sense of humor, and happiness many players enjoy in the game.

Pickleball was created by a group of three families weekending together at Brainbridge Island, Washington USA in 1965 (Pickleball Portal 2020). The group typically played badminton, but when no shuttlecock could be found, the group started experimenting with new combinations of gear, scoring, and play. The game quickly became a popular pastime. Members of the group incorporated Pickle-Ball, Inc. in 1972 and began to manufacture wooden paddles for the sport. In 1984 the owners of Pickle-Ball, Inc. created the United States of America Pickleball Association (USAPA) to encourage the growth of the game and encourage participation in the sport (USAPA 2015b). The game was first played as a

Senior Games event at the Arizona Senior Games in 1991. The tournament drew 100 players. In 2003 USAPA recognized 39 places to play the game in 10 states. The USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) was formed as a nonprofit corporation in 2005. The group launched the web site and created its "Ambassadors Program". The program encourages volunteers to teach the game, promote USAPA, and help to support the growth of the sport (USAPA 2020) at the local level. USAPA later added a discount program for its volunteer Ambassadors (USAPA 2021). Pickleball debuted at the National Senior Games, and courts were available in 420 locations in 43 states inm2008 (USAPA 2015b). USAPA also implemented community and high school grant programs for the purchase of pickleball equipment (USAPA 2020c).

The first USAPA National Tournament was held in 2009 for players of all ages. The tournament drew almost 400 players from 26 states and Canada. Further growth continued via the USAPA's Grant Program to assist players in creating new sites. By the end of 2013, the program added over 1,400 court locations to the national tally (USAPA 2015b). In 2013, the governing body reported 4,000 members. By January 2020, membership had accelerated ten-fold, surpassing 40,000 members. In 2020, the group changed its name from USAPA to USA Pickleball to better align with governing bodies of other sports. The brand re-launch included a new, modern logo, and an updated the website URL to usapickleball.org. Meanwhile, the original equipment producing company Pickle-Ball, Inc. (pickleball.com) continues to supply pickleball equipment and remains in the family. The company reports 30 full-time employees at its plant in Kent, Washington. Company executives are members of the founding families (Pickleball Inc. 2021). Several other companies have emerged selling equipment and merchandise with a pickleball theme.

Pickleball Growth in the United States

Since its origination in Washington state USA, pickleball has become one of the fastest growing sports in the United States. According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), pickleball was enjoyed by approximately 3.3 million players in the United States in 2019, with 1.3 million players considered "core" players (participating in the game 8 or more times in the year) (SFIA 2019).

Number of participants in pickleball in the United States from 2014 to 2019 (in millions) (SFIA 2019).
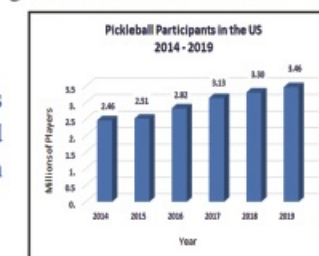
LEAD THE WAY
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物業管理智能化

新冠肺炎疫情持續，成為不少行業的挑戰。物業管理公司除處理日常的物業管理工作之外，亦要為員工和住戶做足保護工作，以應對疫情的發展。物業管理智能化不但可以減少因接觸而引致的傳播風險，節省營運成本、提升管理及營運效率，還可以獲取不同的管理資訊及用戶數據，分析顧客的需要，以改善服務和管理質素，長遠地優化物業設施管理。於健身室管理方面，Halo Facility 正是一個可以連接管理者、鍛煉者和 Life Fitness 有氧健身器材的平台，讓健身室管理者可以隨時遙距查看設備的狀態及使用率，洞察和分析設備使用報告，當有新功能推出的時候更可以一鍵更新。此外，還能定制控制台上的屏幕，建立屋苑專屬屏幕及訊息，讓物業管理公司可以方便有效地推廣最新的活動和公報消息。

健身科技的結合

Life Fitness 除了幫助物業管理公司提升健身室管理效率，亦致力為健身人士尋找和開發新的運動解決方案。隨著可穿戴健身設備逐漸成熟和普及，越來越多人喜歡在鍛煉過程中追蹤心率、速度和卡路里等以進行自我監控。為方便用家可以快速地儲存運動數據，Life Fitness 的 Discover SE3 HD 控制台已支援 Apple Watch® 及 Samsung Galaxy Watch® 的配對，用戶只需把裝置輕觸到控制台上的 NFC 接收器上，便能將運動數據即時同步，可以輕鬆專注於訓練之中。除此之外，用家亦可以下載應用程式 LF Connect，透過 NFC 技術或掃描控制台上的二維碼，快速登入並同步訓練紀錄，追蹤每週的燃燒目標。掃瞄 Life Fitness 力量訓練器材上的二維碼，應用程式更可以跟據用家所輸入的個人身高以提供座椅調整建議，協助沒有教練在場的健身室用家進行鍛煉。

CONSOLE EXPERIENCE

James Leung 梁衍邦
高級項目顧問 - 香港及澳門地區

帶氧運動從此不一樣

不少人對健身室內的有氧健身器材有着沉悶刻板的印象，但時至今日鍛煉者已經可以在連接了網絡的 Discover SE3 HD 控制台上一面進行帶氧運動，一面使用 Netflix ™、Spotify® 和 Pandora® 等媒體，連接藍芽耳機或揚聲器觀看影片和聽音樂。用家亦可以選擇體驗新穎的 Life Fitness ™ On Demand 有氧健身課程，訓練長度從 10 分鐘到 40 分鐘不等，適合任何階段的鍛煉者，跟隨不同風格的導師於有氧健身器材上作不同類型的訓練，當中包括高強度間歇訓練、耐力或速度訓練等，助物業管理公司為住戶提供獨特的健身體驗，住戶又能高效地達到健身目標。
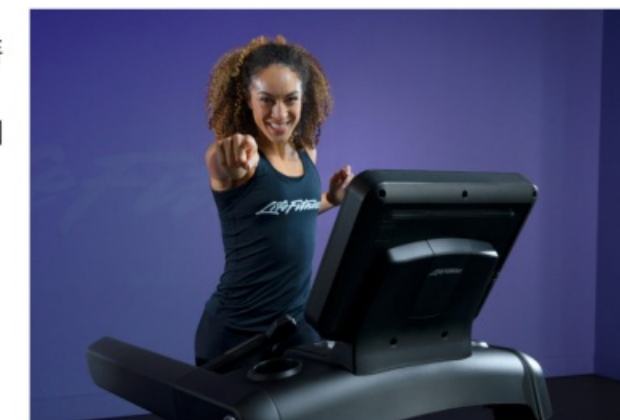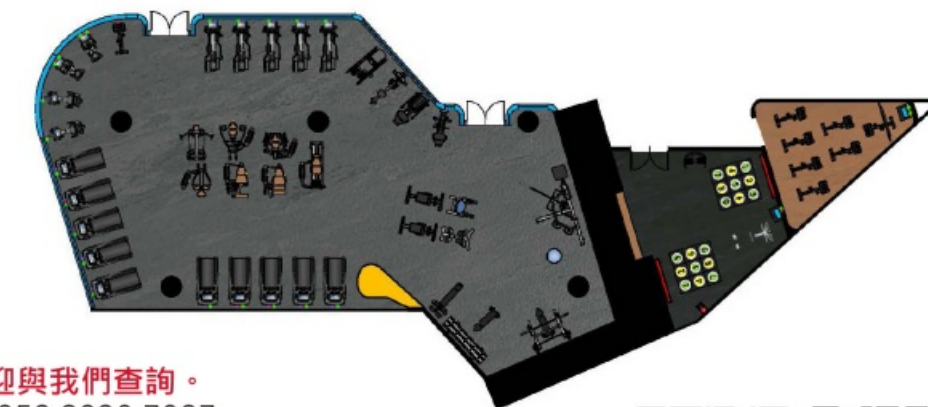

項目分享

Emerald Bay 恆大 · 珺瓏灣

3D 展示片段
（只供參考）

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While this is less than the approximately 17.7 tennis players and 6.3 million badminton players in the United States in the same year, tennis and badminton player numbers warbled, while pickleball bulldozed ahead, registering an Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) for all players of 9.7% per year for all players (and a total leap of 29.1% over three years) and had nearly 1.3 million "core" participants, playing 8 or more times per year (SFIA) and nearly 2 million casual (less than 8 times per year) players. The spread of the sport is attributed to its popularity within community centers, physical education classes, public parks, private health clubs, YM/YWCAs, retirement communities and family entertainment centers. Public courts are can be found via a google search, USA Pickleball's website places2play.org, online player networks (GPN 2021), and mobile apps like Pickleball Finder. In 2018 USAPA's places2play.org, listed 6,885 places to play Pickleball (USAPA 2019), an increase of 1,016 locations (nearly 20%) for the year. The group launched the web site places2play.org and the app Places2Play to provide court location information to players shortly thereafter (Apple 2020). Family entertainment companies such as Chicken 'N Pickle (chickennpickle.com) of Kansas City, Missouri USA are building multi-court pickleball, meeting and restaurant facilities nationally. New public facilities such as the Wiregrass Multi-Sports Complex in Pasco County Florida include eight basketball courts, 16 volleyball courts, two indoor soccer surfaces, two indoor lacrosse surfaces, and 16 pickleball courts (Sports Planning Guide 2020).

Private multi-sport facilities are including pickleball in their construction as well. For example, Morgan's Wonderland Sports in San Antonio, Texas opened in October 2020. The $4-million complex for athletes of diverse abilities opened in October 2020 and offers 28 court or field combinations including two baseball/softball fields, five tennis courts, 20 pickleball courts, a football field, a basketball court and a volleyball court (Morgan's Wonderland 2020). At the same time, instructions became available online advising private citizens how to build courts (Jones 2019). As of 2019, communities with the highest pickleball court density per capita in the United States are Seattle, Washington and Columbus, Ohio with 2.7 courts per 20,000 population each (Statista 2019). Though pickleball originated state or Washington USA, Central Florida is now known as the "Pickleball Capitol of the World". Collier County Florida is widely regarded as a hub due to its 64-court epicenter for pickleball at East Naples Community Park. The Villages, a planned community in Central Florida with over 200 courts and hundreds of players, is also known as a locus of the game. Leagues, tournament and recreational players of all skill levels occupy the courts year-round.

International Expansion

Canadians wintering in Florida may have been the first to carry the game over American borders in the 1990s (Pickleball Canada 2009). Pickleball is said to have arrived in Australia in early 2015, with the sport picked up about 1,500 people and growing in October 2018 (Neal 2018). Pickleball Australia Association's 2020 Strategic Plan expects player numbers to grow 1,500 in 2020 to 5,000 in 2023. This includes goals of establishing coach and referee accreditation, state teams, and hosting an international competition by 2023 (CPR Group 2020). The Asian Federation of Pickleball (afpickleball.org) founding members India, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan. Philippines (afpickleball.org) provides multiple levels international membership and encourages expansion of the game. Established in 2018, the Asian Pickleball Federation (www.asianpickleball.org) encourages all ages to enjoy the sport. The sport is expanding similarly across Europe and around the world. As of 2020, there were 30 international associations for pickleball overseen by the International Federation of Pickleball (www.ifpickleball.org).

International competitions and recognitions have emerged. The first annual $ 100,000 World Pickleball Championships held in 2019 in Punta Gorda, Florida USA, included a $ 100,000 purse, included live broadcast online, and was covered by NBC2 News (NBC2 2019). The sport has also inspired two international tours. The Pro Pickleball Association (PPA) and the Association of Pickleball Professionals (APP) debuted in 2020. The World Pickleball Federation (worldpickleballfederation.org) declared October 10, 2020 as the first annual World Pickleball Day in recognition of the growing sport.

Interesting Aspects of Pickleball

Pickleball differs from traditional sports in several ways. While there are several ways to describe how the pickleball differs from other games, including the following, the specific basis of its overwhelming appeal remains unknown.

Doubles

Pickleball is more often played in doubles, rather than in singles play in many locations. While the reason doubles play is more popular is unsubstantiated, doubles play reduces the range of physical movement required to play the game and reduces the physical impact incurred during play. It makes greater use of limited court facilities, as more players are able to simultaneously play. It may also provide for greater social interaction compared to singles play, as once the ball is served players typically advance to the forecourt line to volley. This puts players in an opposing front facing position approximately 15 feet apart from one another, where facial expression, as well as body position/movement and ball dynamics, become part of the game experience.

Recreational Play

The game is played both competitively and recreationally. While it is generally assumed that all sport participants have a desire to compete, a large sector of pickleball players claim to play for the enjoyment of the game and do not compete in tournaments or formal competitions. In retirement communities with pickleball facilities, pickleball players differentiate between the "competitive" players and the "recreational" ones (Worthington 2018). The structured player rating system further facilitates the differentiation play.

Local Clubs

Local clubs have emerged centered around the sport. In many communities, these clubs include elected club leadership who manage club affairs and work to expand the sport. Groups such as the Cedar Falls Pickleball Club (cfpickleball.com) in Iowa USA work together to collect government, grant resources, and private donations to construct multi-court public facilities, further improving access to the sport (Cedar Falls Pickleball Club 2020).

Ambassadors

USAPA aids in the expansion of the game locally through its Ambassadors program (USAPA 2020a). Ambassadors are volunteer representatives and unofficial spokespersons for USA Pickleball in the geographical area they represent and/or at large. Their primary responsibility is to promote and grow the sport of pickleball. Effective July 15, 2020, USAPA announced an Ambassador Rewards Discount Program with its sister organization Pickleball Central (PickleballCentral.com). The program allows Ambassadors to receive discounts and rebates on

the items they purchase, and those accrue loyalty rebates that can be used to support pickleball in their communities (USAPA 2020b). In 2020, the group is said to have a roster of over 1,900 volunteer ambassadors encouraging others to play the game (Lucore 2020).

Player Rating System

Pickleball is most enjoyed when players of similar skills play the game. To facilitate this and encourage greater competition among many players, a pickleball player rating system was adopted by USAPA in January 2019. As with its rules and equipment, the game once again borrowed elements from other games, as the new ratings are based on an Elo rating system used in chess. Players who have not played in a tournament before rate themselves as to their skills to determine their entry and may seek guidance from experienced tournament-rated players, tournament directors, and ambassadors. Player ratings are thereafter automatically adjusted automatically based on game outcome and the rating of both players. Players may have a rating for singles, doubles, and mixed doubles categories.

Game Dynamics

A unique aspect of pickleball is the somewhat slower pace of the game. The whiffle-like pickleball moves more slowly than in other interactive ball sports. The court is also small enough that the player's position (if a player knows where to position oneself and does so) is usually in alignment with covering most of the court, thereby reducing the dodging and lunging for shots common in tennis. Instead, the serve is successfully returned and players typically hit the ball back and forth several times over the net before a miss or fault of some kind occurs that results in a point. This unique combination of characteristics orchestrates into a game that is relatively easy to understand, enjoyable to play as a beginner, and continues to be challenging as player skills improve.

Social Interaction

While players who travel note a range of typical player behaviors based on location (Worthington 2018), the doubles pickup game is typically highly conversant. Player pairs stand facing each other and can see facial expressions. Once a point is won, players typically congratulate each other for the successful sequence of shots, cajole one another, and/or mutually marvel at how the point was played as they prepare to serve again. Additional conversation typically occurs during the "paddle touching" tradition in which all four players come together in a small circle to touch the ends of the racquet handles together at the end of the game (on hold in some areas due to COVID).

All Ages

Articles regarding pickleball typically highlight the broad appeal of the game (Reynolds, Daum, Frimming & Ehlman 2016, Vitale & Liu 2020). It is a game that teenagers and those 70 years old can enjoy together. In several cases, youth is not a clear advantage in the game, with stories of elders "holding back" while playing against those much younger told (Reynolds, Daum, Frimming & Ehlman 2016).

"This is a sport that suits everybody, particularly older people. I'm in my 70s and there are people playing in their 80s. It's a game you keep on playing," she says. "It's not that difficult to learn, it's a lot of fun to play and it's a very social game." Ginny Conrad, Pickleball Nova Scotia (Journal Pioneer 2019)

The 2019 Sports & Industry Association report found 20.2% of total pickleball participants in the United States were over age 65, 62% of participants were men, and the average age for all players is 41 years old. A remarkable 64% of core players (those playing 8 or more times in the past year) were over age 55 and the average age for core players was 54. The Single Sport Participation Report of the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) on pickleball found that 75% of the games core players (those who play 8 or more times per year) are over the age of 55 (SFIA 2019). The percentage of women participating is also growing (33% to 38% in three years). As a core sport, it is attractive to older male players, with nearly 2 out of every 5 core players over the age of 65.

2018 Total, Core, and Casual Pickleball Players in the United States by Age:

AGE	TOTAL	CORE	CASUAL
6-17	16.7%	8.1%	22.2%
18-34	28.0%	11.4%	38.6%
35-54	20.3%	16.3%	22.9%
55-64	14.9%	24.6%	8.7%
65+	20.2%	39.6%	7.7%

Source: USA Pickleball Fact Sheet / SFIA 2019

Those younger are also discovering the game. The average age for casual players (less than 8 times in the past year) was younger at 33 years old (SFIA 2019). With its ease of play, low cost for equipment, and ability to set up 3 pickleball courts in a basketball area, schools have begun to feature the game in gym class. Parks and recreation programs are also providing the opportunity to play during open gym events.

Addiction to Pickleball

Players talk about being "addicted" to the game in newspaper stories, blog posts, and essay contests. The "addiction" is a deep desire to play the game, often on a daily basis, and may onset upon playing a small number of games.

"My name is Susan, and I've been a functioning pickleball addict for over two years. The addiction took hold of me quickly. It was surprising how easily I was hooked."

Susan Reyes (Reyes 2019)

Companies have also emerged selling equipment and merchandise online with a pickleball theme that players don, both to wear on the courts or share their enthusiasm away from the game.

Training Resources

In addition to learning about and practicing the game on the court, there are a multitude of resources to learn about game gear, paddle techniques, rules and strategies on the interent. Pickleball Magazine is published electronically and claims over 100,000 readers (Pickleball Magazine 2020). Videos of game play are available 24/7 over the web for those interested in learning more about the game to view at all levels of play on The Pickleball Channel (pickleballchannel.com). Newsletters and magazines focusing on pickleball are also available and distributed online, while Youtube hosts an ever-growing collection of advice videos and provides on-demand library of tournament play. LevelUp Pickleball Camps (leveluppickleballcamps.com) boasts an extensive calendar of in-person clinics and learning opportunities. Small-group introductory courses, learning sessions, and one-on-one coaching are offered by individuals and local pickleball organizations.

National Recognition

Countries have added, or are considering adding pickleball to their supported sports roster. Pickleball Canada has been federally recognized as the national source for the sport by the Canadian NSO (Pickleball Canada 2021) and is generating public support for similar providence and territory organizations. A strategic plan was produced by the Pickleball Australia Association and presented to the Australian Sport Authority in 2020 for federal support (CPR Group 2020). The plan includes stablishing coach and referee accreditation schemes, establishing state teams, hosting a host an international competition, and expects participation in Pickleball in Australia to expand from 1,500 in 2020 to 5,000 in 2023. As the popularity of pickleball increases, other organizations may similarly elevate. As of 2020, there were 30 international associations for pickleball in addition to the USAPA overseen by the International Federation of Pickleball (www.ifpickleball.org) and additional pickleball governing organizations exist in addition to those under the IFP umbrella in several countries.

Research

Recently pickleball has generated interest among scholars and researchers. Studies have concentrated on the player experience of older adults, as the game is extremely popular with the older age category. Some of the more interesting research findings include:

- Casper and Jeon (2018) found a positive relationship between pickleball experience and psychological well-being. The survey found fitness and socialization were the primary motives for participation overall, with competition and mastery the motives for those with higher Psychological Continuum Model (Funk and James 2001) scores.

- Heo, Ryu, Yang, Kim, and Rhee (2018) found an inverse relationship between serious leisure in pickleball and player depression. Another study (Ryu et al. 2018) linked playing pickleball with positive levels of life satisfaction. Another quantitative study using data collected at a pickleball tournament by the same team found older adults who played pickleball felt authentic and concluded that playing pickleball may play a role in positive psychological functioning of the participants (Ryu et al. 2020).

- 3,012 pickleball players completed a computer-based survey (Buzzellli & Draper 2019). The study of aging adults (M=63.17 years) found participants were more task-oriented than ego-oriented; intrinsically motivated; and felt participation in pickleball benefited their desire for competition, physical activity, and overall well-being. Results indicated that although survey participants were intrinsically motivated and task-oriented by nature, participants cited competition (thought extrinsic and ego-based) as the top benefit gained by participating in pickleball.

Future Research

Researchers up to this point have primarily surveyed older adult players, though many ages enjoy the game, and game growth is occurring in many age categories. Data collection has occurred primarily at pickleball tournaments

thus far, while much pickleball is enjoyed in recreational play. Research has been largely quantitative, yet will likely soon expand to qualitative and mixed methods inquiry.

With this in mind, research may expand to additional age categories, explore the play experience using data collection instruments that have been used in other sports, and/or explore the play experience with qualitative methods. The influence of health states, psychological factors, demographics and the influence (or lack) of prior sport participation and their influence on older sport participants may be interesting to explore, as may differences in competitive and recreational player profiles and play. Expansion of research may include group dynamics, as many players are also members of pickleball clubs.

Pickleball play, by evidence of its increasing growth and frequency of play provides an experience which players enjoy pursuing. Exploration of the concept of "pickleball addiction", which enthusiastic players profess, should also be pursued. This could include both qualitative cognitive emotional research as well as neurological inquiry with technology that does not incumber play of the game that has been used to assess player experience in other sports (Cheron 2016). New assessment tools may need to be developed, as play experience is understood.

In a recent Facebook post to the Pickleball Forum, Ms. Kelly Donnelly May declared the experience medicinal, rather than addictive (Donnelly May 2021). Within hours, over 100 forum members added comments that unanimously agreed. Such an enthusiastic response calls for investigation with current research methods, and a likely calls for the development of additional tools in the future as we work to understand the game.

Source: Facebook February 4, 2021

Concluding Comments

Since its creation by a group of American families in 1965, the game of pickleball has expanded to world-wide play. It's combination of a whiffle-like ball, composite or wood paddle, smaller court, familiar concepts borrowed from other racquet sports, and sprinkling of a small number of unique rules and traditions combine to create a game enjoyed by all ages, and that expands to challenge players at all levels.

In addition to being a fun game to play, several additional events have aided pickleball's expansion. Founding family members began manufacturing paddles in 1972 and established the United States Pickleball Association (USAPA) to promote the sport. USAPA programs such as the volunteer Ambassador program established in 2005, USA national tournament established in 2009, and international championship begun in 2019 have helped further cultivate participation from beginner to professional play. Additionally, internet resources help millions around the world learn more about the game and how to enjoy the attractive new sport.

Research in the months ahead will help us to further understand pickleball's appeal, and may provide the opportunity to understand if, and how, pickleball might provide positive experience to an increasing number of people in the years ahead. Studying the appeal of the game will help to provide insights as to what components we may want to include in the development of new games, or how to modify established sports to increase their appeal, especially for the over age 50 population worldwide. If it is truly medicinal as Ms. Donnelly-May projects, this hodge-podge game with a humorous name may greatly benefit the health of many in a multitude of ways in the years ahead.

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An Investigation of Female Leadership in Public Sport Organisation: A Case Study of Edinburgh Leisure

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Introduction

According to Emmerik, Wendt and Euwema (2010), males rather than females make up the majority of the top management and leadership group. Female leaders have marginal demographic status in leadership tasks (Rast, 2018). However, with the advance of civilisation of the society and the effort of the feminists, the issue of gender equality has raised people's awareness (Rast, 2018). Based on the research of Simon (2016), females also have the same capability to be the top level leaders or achievers as males in the current society and in the workplace. In the meanwhile, according to the research of Watson and Hoffman (2004), female leaders are as effective as male leaders in motivating their followers to create higher work performance. In addition, an increasing number of researchers and scholars are committed to the development of the topic in relation to gender issues, including salary gap, hiring and promotion discrimination, treatment and work environment difference, and evaluation distinction (Simon, 2016).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that even though there are an increasing number of people paying more attention to the topics of female leadership and gender equality, women are dramatically rated less than male leaders, especially in the top level leadership positions, such as decision-making roles (Eagly et al., 1992; Emmerik, Wendt & Euwema, 2010; Latu et al., 2013; Watson & Hoffman, 2004). In other words, leadership is still stereotypically seen as masculine and females are under-presented in terms of leadership, especially in

senior positions (Kawakami et al., 2000; Schein, 1975). This means that the leadership and management capabilities of women in leadership roles tend to be limited and underestimated. Because of the threat of this gender-occupational stereotype, women's performance in relation to leadership in the workplace may be undermined and even neglected. Moreover, this stereotype includes the differences of leadership behaviours, skills as well as abilities in relation to motivating and encouraging employees and followers, managerial decision-making strategies, communication and negotiation capabilities, and problem-solving competence (Bergeron, Block & Echtenkamp, 2006; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2010; Kray, Thompson & Galinsky, 2001). Rhee and Sigler (2015) suggested that there were two dilemmas for women to be competent for the leadership tasks. On the one hand, female leaders who exhibited feminine traits in the process of leadership may not be considered as appropriate, efficient and legitimate leaders by the subordinates. On the other hand, women leaders with masculine characteristics may be unfavoured and evaluated critically due to the distinct gender role (Butler and Geis, 1990; Koch, 2005; Phelan & Rudman, 2010). These bias, cultural stereotypes and dilemmas are difficult to eliminate in the short term. Nonetheless, Latu et al (2013) noted that one way to improve the development of female leadership and gender equality was to expose females to highly successful role models in leadership positions. Thus, it is imperative to conduct more studies on the relationships between leadership and gender issues to provide a more comprehensive

understanding between gender and leadership role (Flynn & Ames, 2006; Gill, 2004; Glick, Larsen, Johnson & Branstiter, 2005; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman & Stopek, 1985; Latu et al, 2013; Rhee & Sigler, 2015).

In the context of Scotland, Leith and Sim (2020) argued that even though both men and women have played a significant role in the country's history, male contributions were overmuch emphasised, while female contributions were marginalised. Nonetheless, with the trend of lower fertility rates, smaller families and delayed plans to marry and have children in life, more women participated in the workplace in Scotland. In addition, the introduction of laws and regulations (i.e., the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975; the Historical Sexual Offences Act in 2018; the Gender Representation on Public Boards Act in 2018) has greatly accelerated the progress towards gender equality in Scotland. Such advances do not mean that Scotland has achieved gender equality. In contrast, there are still barriers to women's participation in the workplace. For instance, women take on both family and work responsibility, which indicates more pressure on women employees. Moreover, the pay gap still remains except for the Public Sector till now. Besides, the percentage of women in senior and managerial positions is still low, and the opportunity of leadership roles tend to be provided for men rather than women. In terms of the Public Sector as Edinburgh Leisure, even without pay inequality, women are still under-represented compared to men employees. Such imbalance is at its highest in the board of Public Sector bodies.

As mentioned above, Scotland could be often viewed as a country with masculinity, and the attitude towards gender tends to be more conservative than other parts of the UK or other Western countries in the early twentieth century (Leith & Sim, 2020). Nevertheless, such value has been changing over the years, especially in twenty-first-century. Based on MacInnes (1998), Scotland has moved away from the inherited rigid social gender roles, which reflected on the ideal that men were work roles ('breadwinner') and women were family roles ('housekeeper'). Furthermore, according to the follow-up research of MacInnes (2005), Scottish attitude to gender nowadays which has become a commitment to equality were almost the same with other European states. In this research, specific objectives were:
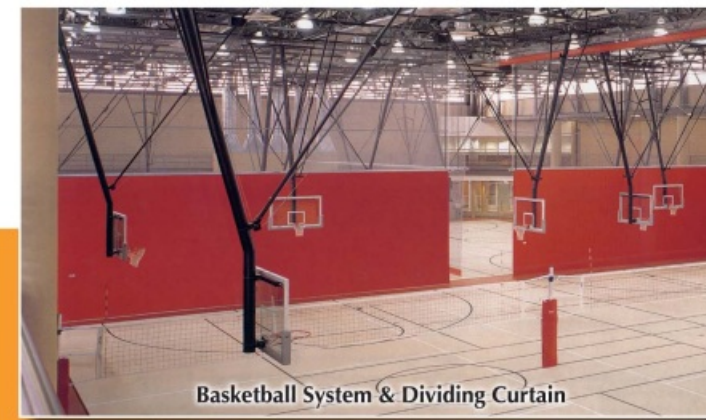
1. To explore the status of female leaders and the situation of gender equality in Edinburgh Leisure;
2. To investigate the primary leadership styles of female leaders and potential factors influencing leadership behaviours;
3. To examine the extent that Edinburgh Leisure's policy and system has promoted gender equality.

Significance of the Study

The discussion of gender equality exists in almost every situation that both men and women are involved. Researchers from all over the world have studied the issues related to gender equality in sport organisations (e.g., in Australia, Adriaanse, 2015; Banu-Lawrence, Frawley & Hoeber, 2020; Denmark, Norway & Sweden, Ottesen et al., 2010; Velija, Ratna & Flintoff, 2014). Nonetheless, compared to other Western countries, there is a dearth of gender studies that explore female leadership issues in a specific sport organisation, especially in the Public Sector. This research which focused on Edinburgh Leisure which is Scottish Public Sector, Leisure Trust and the biggest sport organisation in Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, is a representative case study to the field of sport and gender in Scotland. Through exploring the status of female leaders and the situation of gender equality in Edinburgh Leisure, the findings of this research indicated the leadership styles of female leaders and the underlying factors affecting leadership behaviours. Besides, among studies on gender issues in sport organisations, most gave primacy to the situation of gender balance and the reasons of such situation rather than policy perspective, while this study also investigated the policy and system promoting gender equality in Edinburgh Leisure.

Methods

A single-case study (Yin, 2009) approach was applied to this research. Edinburgh Leisure was selected as a case on the basis of particular representative and significant attributes (Bryman, 2016; Denscombe, 2007). In qualitative studies, the contextual uniqueness and the in-depth analysis of the research subject are distinctive characteristics. Therefore, this research is not designed to examine the development of female leadership and the situation of

gender equality in sport industry. Instead, the specific description and detailed analysis of female leadership and gender equality in Edinburgh Leisure is the emphasis.

Participants

Concerning the topic of female leadership and gender equality in Edinburgh Leisure, interviewees identified for this research should be female leaders who have worked inside assorted programmes in different levels for Edinburgh Leisure for many years. Four interviewees were invited to participate. All of the interviewees were female leaders taking charge of various big facilities in one or more venues and managing a certain number of staff in Edinburgh Leisure.

Table 1 Profiles of the interviewees

Interviewee	Venue(s)	Position	Number of subordinates
A	Glenogle Swim Centre Dalry Swim Centre	Leisure manager	43 people
B	The Royal Commonwealth Pool	Operations manager	6 duty managers
C	Leith Victoria Swim Centre	Leisure manager	35 people
D	Active Communities Team	Head	2 managers 32 staff

Email Interviews

Email interview was the key research method applied in the procedure of data collection. It is worth mentioning that email interviews were more reasonable as a way to contact involved interviewees. Since female leaders were hectic with their leadership jobs, especially in summer when interviews were intended to be conducted, and had limited time to accept face-to-face interviews. In other words, it is complicated for them to arrange a fixed time to meet and discuss with the interviewer during this period which was the most active time of a year for people to exercise in the club. Despite those female leaders thought this research was interesting and meaningful, and were delighted to have face-to-face interviews with the researcher, for avoiding bothering the busy daily work of female leaders, email interviews were eventually applied in this research.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The sources of data were mainly from interviews and official website information of Edinburgh Leisure and the relevant authorities. The first-hand and in-depth written replies provided by female leisure leaders are their answers to research questions with real opinions and logical thinking. In addition to the primary data sourced from interviews, the secondary data included official website content of Edinburgh Leisure and online documents of local authorities such as the sport-related report published by Scottish government.

Both the primary data and secondary data were subjected to qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Based on research questions and theoretical framework, all data were organised into five parts which are work background, leadership styles, policy and system, gender equality, and future career plan for discussion of findings.

Findings and Discussion

According to data collection from interviews with female leaders in Edinburgh Leisure based on three main research questions, several key issues involving the status of female leaders, the situation of gender equality, their leadership styles and behaviours, and policy and system promoting gender equality within organisation will be presented in this section. It is necessary to state that in order to protect the primacy of these research participates, the personal information, such as their name, will not be disclosed.

Work Background and Self-development

Among all interviewees, not everyone was engaged in Sport and Leisure Sector from the beginning. Some of them worked in other areas rather than sport industry when they started working. According to these female leaders, all of them had experienced a process of obtaining relational qualification before they became a Leisure Manager since they worked in Edinburgh Leisure. For

example, Female Leisure Manager A was primarily qualified to Secondary School Higher Level, with qualifications mainly being in business studies. Then she was employed as a full-time receptionist in Edinburgh Leisure. After attaining the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ), she secured a Duty Manager post and remained initially for two years. From Duty Manager to Leisure Manager, she experienced a series of internal courses for personal development and obtained the Managing Safely Qualification of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), which was required for her current position. Female Leisure Manager D majored in Sport, Leisure, and Recreation Management in university and worked in physical activity and Sport Development Sector through her life. Although not every female leader had relative background of sport and leisure industry, all of them had obtained corresponding qualifications to support them to be competent for the management and leadership job (Miskelly & Duncan, 2014). The categories of those qualifications included coaching, training and leadership in sport. In other words, it was difficult for these female managers to be given promotion opportunities without related qualifications (Saner, 2001; Van Dijk, 2016). In addition, the promotion opportunities were provided for female Leisure Managers because of the accumulation of their seniority and qualifications.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that these interviewed female Leisure Managers were working at the operational level rather than management level when they started working in Edinburgh Leisure. Their management and leadership abilities were cultivated and developed during the process of the element task and basic work. Moreover, due to their diverse work background and various work experiences, they could adapt to daily work and improved personal competitiveness.

The Role and Identity of a Leisure Manager

Leisure Managers who participated in this research have different specific roles and identities. All of the female Leisure Managers had the ownership of and were accountable for the annual financial budget of the venues they worked at. In other words, they had the final say in all aspects of venue finance and budgeting. The financial situation has been seen as an inevitable organisational

problem for sport clubs in recent years (Gumulka et al., 2005; Lasby & Sperling, 2007; Sharpe, 2006; Taylor et al., 2009; Wicker & Breuer, 2013). According to the research in Scotland of Allison (2001), some of the Scottish sport clubs suggested that they experienced varying degrees of financial and economic issues or uncertainties. Such financial difficulties include reduced financial support from the government, decreased funding from individuals and so on (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). Hence, it was challenging for these female Leisure Managers to have full control of the venue budget under this serious circumstance.

The Responsibility and Obligation of a Leisure Manager

Female Leisure Managers can be seen as human resources capacity in Edinburgh Leisure, meanwhile, human resources capacity is one of the main dimensions of the organisational capacity, the other two are financial capacity as well as structural capacity (Hall et al., 2003). Additionally, organisational capacity can reflect the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the performance of one organisation (Hall et al., 2003). Therefore, the performance of these female Leisure Managers has influence on the performance of Edinburgh Leisure.

Based on the information on the official website of Edinburgh Leisure (2018), Edinburgh Leisure believes that sport and physical activities have positive impact on the wellbeing and physical, mental, and social health of individuals and communities, and they contribute to inspire everyone in Edinburgh to be more active and healthy. In specific, the organisational purpose is to make positive difference to communities by creating opportunities for people to get active, stay active, and achieve more; the vision is to inspire Edinburgh to be a more active and

healthy city and encourage everyone to reap the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle and to feel good; and in terms of values, Edinburgh Leisure are passionate about the power of sport and the pride it brings and support this with a welcoming, caring, and engaged team. Both of Female Leisure Manager A and Female Leisure Manager C mentioned that they had obligations to fulfil the purpose in order to achieve the vision and the values. As Female Leisure Manager D expressed that:

"I am a highly motivated individual who passionately believes in the positive impact physical activity and sport can have on individuals' and communities' physical, mental and social health and wellbeing. A sport development professional who believes that physical activity and sport is vehicles for positive change."

Hall and other researchers (2003) also argued that the mission of one organisation can be provided to its members by sport programmes. In the meanwhile, the sport programmes were managed by these managers. Thus, the spread and fulfil of the mission had close relations with these managers to some extent.

Preparation for Future Career Plan

In terms of qualifications or experiences to develop leadership in Health, Fitness and Sport Industry, both Female Leisure Manager A and Female Leisure Manager B suggested that they had no ambition to achieve more qualifications and higher positions. However, they had different reasons of staying in the current posts. Female Leisure Manager A explained that:

"I have all the relevant qualifications I need at present to do my job. I also have the perfect work and life balance just now, with plenty of things to keep me busy. Two young children to care and I work full time hours over four days, managing two venues! At this point in my career I have stability and am not planning on developing further or taking on more additional responsibility."

Female Leisure Manager B replied that:

"I have two years until potential retirement and I am not looking to progress at this stage of my career. In terms of the general future plan, I would like to keep doing what I do well and to ensure that I meet all aims and objectives of my post, and to keep working for Edinburgh Leisure."

Nevertheless, Female Leisure Manager D had no ambition to achieve higher position but planned to have more qualifications related to physical activity, she revealed that:

"I find managing work life and home life challenging, even with my employer being so flexible. I would not actively want to progress my career further at this particular moment of my life. I would love to do more but cannot commit the time at this stage in my career and life. However, I have taken part in PG Cert Physical Activity for Health modules for my CPD which has been most beneficial. I want to continue to develop myself to be a strong, confident leader, making strategic decisions, empowered and making a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland. I would like to progress in my career within Edinburgh Leisure."

On the basis of the above feedback, family situations and age issues were two significant factors which affected the job choices and career ambitions of these female Leisure Managers. Unlike Female Leisure Manager A and Female Leisure Manager B, Female Leisure Manager C revealed that:

"I plan on looking at gaining any qualifications that will enable me to be better positioned for a larger venue like […] as regards the future career plan, I plan on stay at […] venue until I complete the planned lifecycle […] closure to upgrade the […] I am ready for the challenge of managing a larger venue like […]."

As analysed earlier, Female Leisure Manager C's leadership style is authoritative. Based on the study of Goleman (2000), different leadership styles may reflect different personalities and characteristics. Therefore, in addition to family conditions and age issues, personality serves as another factor influencing female managers' job choices and career ambitions. Although the choices of

Female Leisure Manager A and Female Leisure Manager B were different from Female Leisure Manager C, all of them clearly expressed that they will keep working in Edinburgh Leisure and doing the assigned work well. Such conservative choice reflected that they were not willing to empress that they wanted to challenge themselves and tried something different or unfamiliar with their current roles.

Leadership Styles and Behaviours

According to Goleman (2000), there are six leadership styles: coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and coaching leaders. Some of these Female Leisure Managers did not utilise the above six words to generalise their own leadership style but several sentences or a paragraph to explain it. However, the researcher could speculate it with theoretical knowledge in relation to leadership. This does not mean that the researcher can ensure their leadership styles but can estimate that which leadership style will be more reflected than other five styles through the behaviours of them. Among these Female Leisure Managers, Female Leisure Manager B clearly adopted 'democratic' to describe her leadership style. She stated that she was willing to think about and respected everyone's opinions and thoughts.

Nonetheless, Female Leisure Manager A explained that:

"Supportive, motivating […] and I want all my colleagues and subordinates to get the best opportunity out of work."

Similarly, Female Leisure Manager D revealed that:

"I am a confident, positive leader who is happy to delegate and trust my staff to work independently. I work with my team to set a clear vision for what we will achieve. I have high expectations from my staff and give people the autonomy they need to lead their areas of expertise."

According to the description of Female Leisure Manager A and Female Leisure Manager D, they motivated their followers to have their own ideas and supported them to chase for better opportunities. Moreover, they hoped that people can benefit a lot from the work. Thus, the leadership styles of Female Leisure Manager A and Female Leisure Manager D were more inclined to democratic leadership.

As regards the feedback of Female Leisure Manager C, she remarked that:

"I operate an open-door policy, in other words, I am

firm but fair. Sometimes I have to make unpopular decisions which are the nature of the job. I always make a point of walking the floor each day and speaking to my team to see how they are and to chat about lives out with the working environment."

From the explanation of Female Leisure Manager C, on the one hand, in the workplace, she was strict, but also equal to everyone. In addition, she insisted on her decisions if others disagreed with her. On the other hand, she was willing to communicate with the colleagues in relation to both career and life, which indicated that she could separate work from personal life. However, in this leadership section, we only analysed the behaviours and performance of managers in the workplace. Therefore, the leadership style of Female Leisure Manager C was inclined to be authoritative. In addition, the democratic leadership style of the Female Leisure Manager A, Female Leisure Manager B and Female Leisure Manager D reflected the characteristics of transformational leadership style (Peachey et al., 2015; Tichy & Devanna, 1986).

Differences of Male and Female Leaders in Sport Sector

Based on the study regarding to sport clubs in Scotland (Allison, 2001), 41% of the Scottish sport clubs admitted the lack of women members. There were fewer females exercising in sport clubs in Scotland compared to males. Furthermore, this study suggested that although the number of females was gradually increasing, they were still typically underrepresented in sport clubs. Similarly, Female Leisure Manager B remarked that:

"I think that women are underrepresented in some areas of Health, Fitness and Sport Sector, especially at boardroom level."

D, female leaders tended to hold the same and even more resources than male leaders since the increasing number of women applying themselves to the management position in Sport Sector. In addition, Female Leisure Manager C owed the equality between female and male staff to the establishment of the 'Leisure Trust'. In other words, 'Leisure Trust' has great positive impact on eliminating inequality of genders in management level. In contrast, Female Leisure Manager B believed that there exists different treatment on male and female leaders in sport industry.

She believed that the underrepresented phenomenon of female leaders was more obvious in the top level in an organisation. Such phenomenon was also mentioned in the research of Hawarden and Marsland (2011) and Bartol (1978). Female leaders may have less authority than male leaders, and the number of female leaders was fewer than male leaders, especially on the board. However, the situation has experienced changes and different organisations have different conditions. Female Leisure Manager C argued that:

"I think over recent years, the difference between male and female leadership in Health, Fitness and Sport Sector has changed dramatically. There are more females in manager positions now compared to the 1990s and early 2000 it was primarily males. It has defiantly changed since we broke away from the council and became a Leisure Trust."

In the meanwhile, Female Leisure Manager D added that:

"I have always found the third Sector and Health & Fitness Sector to be very equitable. When I started in the industry fifteen years ago, I found the senior management roles were quite male dominated within the industry. This has changed somewhat over the years but still many of the CEOs and board members of Leisure Trusts are male although this is slowly changing, with Edinburgh Leisure leading the way."

Furthermore, Female Leisure Manager A remarked that:

"It is equal regarding difference of leadership between women and men within Edinburgh Leisure in all areas, although there are more females working within venue manager positions."

From the answers of Female Leisure Manager A, Female Leisure Manager C and Female Leisure Manager

Gender equality in organisations involves a range of areas, which include hiring and recruitment, promotion and opportunities, and pay gap (Acker, 1991). In the written replies of all interviewees, they remarked that they were never discriminated as female Leisure Managers. Additionally, they had fair and equal pay with male managers. Female Leisure Manager B explained in detail:

"Edinburgh Leisure recognises that quality services meet and exceed customer expectations can only be fulfilled in a context which frees staff and customers alike from all forms of discrimination. Edinburgh Leisure ensures that staff recruitment and development opportunities are conducted based on full equality of opportunity. We have an Equal Opportunities Policy. In addition, Edinburgh Leisure also ensures that in its corporate life, Edinburgh Leisure is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment, which reduce the effectiveness of employee contribution and impairs the equality of services at Edinburgh Leisure."

Female Leisure Manager D also suggested that:

"I have always found Edinburgh Leisure to have gender equality. Our senior leadership team is 50/50 male/female and our senior managers are predominately female."

According to the answers of all female Leisure Managers, it is worth noting that there was an official policy called 'Equal Opportunities Policy', which could be reflected in the following areas. First, providing full equality opportunity of staff recruitment and promotion development; second, eliminating all forms of discrimination to both staff and members, including harassment; third, ensuring fair and equal payment for all staff of different genders. Furthermore, according to the statements of these interviewees, Edinburgh Leisure recognises gender equality is an important part of quality service, and only equality is fulfilled based on or even exceeding customer

requirement, could the quality service as well as organisational effectiveness be improved.

Barriers and Limits to Top Level in Sport Sector

Female Leisure Managers also expressed their concerns in relation to the future career planning in Sport Sector. Female Leisure Manager B explained that:

"In some areas, such as football, very few women reach the top in boardrooms. I think that this is replicated in other sports. I think it is better than it was, but there is still away to go."

In addition, Female Leisure Manager C mentioned some fundamental factors:

"Many jobs are stagnant, especially with changes to recruitment age and the pension resulting in a bit of a gridlock."

Similarly, Female Leisure Manager D argued that:

"It needs to be more flexible working to encourage those with young families to progress into top jobs."

Under this circumstance, Wicker and Breuer (2013) suggested that sport clubs may have a problem of the attraction of new staff and members. In other words, the sport industry may be caught in a dilemma due to the slow development of the new management and leadership generation.

Family-friendly Policy

Family-friendly Policy for Employment' means that Edinburgh Leisure provides the employees, especially female employees with their children to raise or their parents in need of support related friendly policies during the process of recruitment. Women on the board should be an important part of human resource capacity, which reflects in organisational capacity and performance in an organisation. According to female Leisure Managers, Edinburgh Leisure emphasises on the support for them in terms of family-friendly policy. For example, Female Leisure Manager B mentioned that:

"Edinburgh Leisure recognises that their employees are their biggest asset. It is important to recruit the right people in the right posts. Edinburgh Leisure looks to attract, retain, assess, develop, and deploy the talents."

Therefore, based on her replies, Edinburgh Leisure treated their staff as their base and advantages. On the one

hand, Edinburgh Leisure attracted people and enabled both managers and other staff to perform their own roles according to their abilities and speciality. In other words, the employees would be distributed into appropriate posts based on their talent rather than their background. On the other hand, after they were recruited into Edinburgh Leisure, Edinburgh Leisure adopted some measures in order to cultivate and develop the professional quality of their leaders, and assessed and retained their talents. In the meanwhile, for women managers, there were a series of family-friendly policies in Edinburgh Leisure. For instance, Female Leisure Manager A noted that:

"Edinburgh Leisure is extremely supportive regarding my family and work life balance. I was granted condensed working hours a couple of years ago and I work Monday to Thursday each week. I was provided with paid time off work this year to allow me to stay with my son when he was admitted to hospital. By the way, staff are allocated up to five special leave days paid year for exceptional circumstances, as detailed in our special leave policy."

Similarly, Female Leisure Manager D mentioned that:

"I find Edinburgh Leisure to be an extremely flexible family friendly employer. For example, I work a condensed four days on working week, so I can spend more time with my two young children."

Thus, in Edinburgh Leisure, there are relative policies provided for women with children to care, such as working time compression as well as special paid leave. In addition, because of these family-friendly policies, Female Leisure Manager A felt that she could balance her work life and family life. In this case that family life was guaranteed, the employees were more involved in their work life. Hence, such supportive policy of Edinburgh Leisure may improve organisational performance to some extent.

Support System

'Support System for Leaders' means that female Leisure Mangers of Edinburgh Leisure experience relative support system to help and develop themselves to be a leader, such as training, course, and job rotation. The support system means how Edinburgh Leisure develops employees to be a qualified leader with training. Female Leisure Manager C mentioned her experiences as a beginner in a new post:

"I had a huge amount of support and guidance when I was new in post. I had gained lots of on the job experience and I know if I need support of guidance I can contact my peers or my line manager."

As a new manager, Leisure Managers were provided support and guidance in relation to new information and requirements in the new post. In the meanwhile, the sources of support were not only from organisational training, but also the help of peers and colleagues. However, it is worth noting that the guidance will be provided not only in the initial stage in a new post, but also during the whole career life. Female Leisure Manager A remarked that:

"My career to date with Edinburgh Leisure is due to the support, guidance, training and development that they have provided me. I have been through a career development programme, been mentored by others and had lots of support and encouragement. There are so many courses provided for all staff to attend, some of which are essential, with others available for career progression and I have maximised every opportunity available."

Furthermore, Female Leisure Manager B noted that:

"Edinburgh Leisure has a Learning and Development Section that provides a variety of internal and external training for staff they believe in investing in staff on-going development and growth."

Female Leisure Manager D remarked that:

"I have always had very supportive and encouraging managers and mentors within Edinburgh Leisure who have encouraged me to develop myself and my career within the organisation. I have been involved in various leadership, coaching, mentoring, learning and development as well as career development courses."

Form the feedback of Female Leisure Manager A, Female Leisure Manager B and Female Leisure Manager D, the training and courses for employees were continuous rather than a certain period. They suggested that there was a programme or section of career learning and development in Edinburgh Leisure. Such programme or section included internal training and courses in relation to career guidance, as well as external communication and activities. All of the four interviewees revealed that through the support system, they had obtained the job experience and encouragement. Moreover, they believed that the support system helped them to develop and grow in career, and it was available for them to gain career opportunities and progression. Additionally, according to the answers of Female Leisure Manager A, all staff in Edinburgh Leisure could attend the training courses for career development. It means that everyone have equal rights to pursue higher positions.

Limitations of the Research and Directions for the Future Studies

This research has mainly explored female leadership through different perspectives involving the status of female leaders, leadership styles and behaviours, and policy and system on gender equality in Edinburgh Leisure. However, due to the busy daily work of female Leisure Managers, the small number of interviews has been conducted. Hence, the data collected was relatively limited. Besides, the generality of the results of this case study with qualitative content analysis was low to some extent. In addition, due to the limitations of timing and access, the detailed performance of these female Leisure Managers except for leadership styles has not been examined. More details related to work behaviours of female Leisure Managers within a micro-organisational environment should be investigated and more interviews should be conducted for more comprehensive data in the follow-up research.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the status quos of female leadership as well as gender equality in Edinburgh Leisure and investigate the perspectives of female Leisure Managers regarding to policy and support system for female staff. First of all, through a review of literature, 'Leisure Trust' as an important part of Public Sector of sport industry in the UK, has the positive impact on the development of citizens' health (Henry, 1990; Lowenberg, 1997). In addition, compared to the Private Sectors, Public Sectors may provide better work conditions in terms of gender equality (Rubery, 2015). This is because that all British public organisations have responsibilities to promote gender equality in the workplace (Rubery, 2015). Concerning leadership theories, effective leadership can be seen as a kind of ability to motivate and encourage efficient organisational performance (House et al., 2004).

The six leadership styles including coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and coaching, were utilised to analyse and speculate both behaviours and personalities of these female Leisure Managers in the findings and discussion section. With regard to the difference of leadership between males and females, female leaders tend to be more transformational and people-oriented than male leaders. In other words, women leaders may have more harmonious relationship and less emotional conflicts with other staff of organisations (Bass, 2008; Shin, Heath & Lee, 2011). In terms of gender issues, UK Sport Agency (2012) suggested that there were more male leaders in sport industry. However, there were an increasing number of organisations in sport industry pay more attention to gender equality (Megheirkouni & Roomi, 2017; White & Brackenridge, 1985). The problem is that although the gap between male and female leadership is narrowing, female leaders still work at lower management levels and hold less authority than male leaders (Bartol, 1978). Nevertheless, British sport organisations have taken measures to increase the participation rate of females in top management level (Acker, 2008; Megheirkouni & Roomi, 2017). Such efforts have advantageous effects on the balance and long-term development of quality service of organisations (Benington & white, 1988; Acker, 1992).

Through the email interviews with these four female Leisure Managers in Edinburgh Leisure, these interviewees explained their real perspectives in relation to self-development and promotion opportunities, leaders' roles and responsibilities, their own leadership styles, organisational policy and support system, gender equality situations, and their future career plans in Edinburgh Leisure.

All female Leisure Managers participating in this research have worked in Edinburgh Leisure for many years, and they also revealed that they will keep working for Edinburgh Leisure. Some of female Leisure Managers did not have any background of sport industry while some were related to Health and Fitness Sctor before they worked in Edinburgh Leisure. However, qualifications relative to sport were necessary and essential for managers to be given the opportunities of employment and promotion. Female Leisure Managers believed that these various work experiences as well as corresponding qualifications were helpful for them to obtain management and leadership occupations.

Even though the female interviewees have different specific roles, all of them as managers have the full control and final say of annual financial budget of the venues they work at. They indicated that they were accountable to spread and fulfil the mission of Edinburgh Leisure, which was to inspire Edinburgh to be a more active and healthy city and encourage everyone in Edinburgh to be more active and healthy through their work. In terms of leadership styles, according to the written replies of female interviewees, they tended to use "democratic" (Female Leisure Manager A, Female Leisure Manager B & Female Leisure Manager D) and "authoritative" (Female Leisure Manager C) to describe their leadership styles.

As human resource, which is a significant component of organisational capital, female Leisure Managers are recognised to be "the biggest asset" by Edinburgh Leisure (Female Leisure Manager B). In addition, Edinburgh Leisure is "extremely supportive" regarding the family-friendly policy and support system (Female Leisure Manager A). For example, there were a series of policies for female employees who have children to raise, such as working time compression as well as special paid leave, which could make them feel that it was possible for them to "balance her work life and family life" (Female Leisure Manager A). For Edinburgh Leisure, managers who have balance with their work life and personal life may be better involved in work, and the organisational performance will be improved to some extent. Internal trainings and external communications were provided for Leisure Managers to improve their leadership and management skills and abilities by Edinburgh Leisure. The internal trainings were continuous and mainly served as a "Career Development Programme" (Female Leisure Manager A) or a "Learning and Development Section" (Female Leisure Manager B) in order to provide on-going career guidance and support. Moreover, such programme and section were available for every staff at different positions and levels in Edinburgh Leisure. In the meanwhile, these female Leisure Managers indicated that they could indeed acquire job experience as well as encouragement from this programme and section.

There are almost half of the Scottish sport clubs suggest they have issues of the lack of women participants (Allison, 2001). Although this problem has been improved in recent years, men are still dominated in sport industry while women are typically underrepresented in general (Allison, 2001). Especially at "boardroom level" of Health, Fitness and Sport Sector, this underrepresented phenomenon of female leaders is more obvious (Female Leisure Manager B). However, in Edinburgh Leisure, the situation may be different. The difference between male and female leaders has been challenged and changed since Edinburgh Leisure broke away from the Council and became a 'Leisure Trust'. In other words, the establishment of the 'Leisure Trust' had great positive impact on the gender equality of Edinburgh Leisure. Nowadays, male and female leaders are equal to acquire opportunities in all positions in Edinburgh Leisure, even there are more female leaders working at venue manager positions. Furthermore, all female interviewees revealed that there was no discrimination between male and female leisure managers in terms of hiring and recruitment, promotion and opportunities, and pay gap. This was because of Equal Opportunities Policy, which included providing full equality opportunity of staff recruitment and promotion development, eliminating all forms of discrimination to both staff and members, and ensuring fair and equal payment for all staff of different genders, guarantees the implementation of the quality service of gender equality. Through this policy, the effectiveness of employee contribution and the equality of quality service will be improved in Edinburgh Leisure.

Concerning the future career plan of these female leisure managers, all of them will keep staying in Edinburgh Leisure. One manager among them indicated that she looked forward to obtain more qualifications for working in higher positions, while the rest were not willing to change the current roles and conditions. The main reasons why female leisure managers had no ambition and were conservative to acquire higher positions are family situations, retirement age and personalities.

Limitations of this study include the adoption of email interviews rather than semi-structured interviews which may collect further information in the process of interviews because of the busy daily work of female leisure managers. In addition, there are four out of twelve female leisure managers who were contacted by the research replying the interview questions, which shown that the response rate (25%) was not high and the number of interviewees was not enough to support the research. However, the interview questions were in-depth, and these interviewees had given clear answers, which may made up the lack of samples. In future research, male leisure managers and other staff at different levels should be involved in order to understand the female leadership in Edinburgh Leisure from various angles.

Although the results of this study cannot be generalised in all sport clubs in the UK and even the world, this research can still reflect the status quo of female leadership and gender equality in Public Sport Sector in Scotland to some extent. Furthermore, this paper advises that more female leaders and managers should be involved in the sport industry. It can not only improve the organisational quality service in the short term, but also enrich the organisational culture in the long term. RMA

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