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Intramural sports' participation produce self-efficacy in hospitality leaders

James A. Williams [a, *], Eric A. Brown [b], Miranda Kitterlin [c], Stefanie Benjamin [a]

[a] Retail Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Tennessee Knoxville, 1215 West Cumberland Ave, 220B Jessie W. Harris, Knoxville, TN 37996-1900, USA
[b] Department of Apparel, Events, and Hospitality Management, Iowa State University, USA
[c] Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Florida International University, USA

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ABSTRACT

This study explored sports' experiences of 11 hospitality leaders who played sports while completing a hospitality undergraduate degree. A multiple coder and triangulation approach was employed to highlight four major themes: confidence, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration. These themes were grouped together to form soft skills tailor-made for self-efficacy development. Sports (i.e., basketball, volleyball, and football) function as a staple for the development of soft skills (intangible skill sets or attributes). Sports furnish individuals with opportunities to perform in teams, to lead others, and to operate under pressure-filled situations. Results indicated that college sport's participation is an effectual way to grow future hospitality leaders pivotal soft skills for the 21st century workforce.

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1. Introduction

Learning is pivotal to the development of human skill sets. Human skills can be viewed in two parts: hard skills and soft skills (Chow, Lau, Lo, Sha, & Yun, 2007). Hard skills are more technical in nature, while soft skills are demonstrated with personal attributes (Kay & Russette, 2000). Soft skills are viewed as intangible attributes that augment one's success in service industry work environments, such as confidence, learning style, adaptability, and communication (Spowart, 2011). These skill sets can be seen as essential keys to effectual human interaction, management of high-pressure situations, and a belief in one's prowess to succeed in a given task (Kay & Russette, 2000). High-pressure situations are inevitable in hospitality environments, which are similar to sport environments or events; but sports have been known to provide individuals with skills needed to overcome difficult challenges (Williams, Bosselman, Hurst, & Zheng, 2013a). Sports produce high-pressure settings and force athletes to interact with diverse individuals (e.g., with different genotypes and phenotypes) and oppositions on a consistent basis (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983).

Hospitality professionals hail from disparate geographical locations, traditions and cultures, languages, and universities. Team sports have a way of fusing various characteristics and disparate skills sets together to augment collaboration in stressful game time situations (Korte & Lin, 2013; Williams, Brown, Bosselman, Foucar-Szocki, 2013b). College intramural and varsity team sports are structured programs that provide college students with an opportunity to participant in a collaborative sport (Williams et al., 2013a,b). Team sports require a multitude of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and followership and leadership skills to achieve set team goals (Chelladurai, 1980; Williams, Roberts, & Bosselman, 2011). However, hard skills (e.g., working with computer software or solving a mathematical equation) can be introduced and taught in classroom conditions, as well as from some on-the-job training (OJT). However, concepts and hard skill competencies cannot prepare hospitality students for volatile work situations, such as managing social behaviors of disgruntle employees or unsatisfied guests or customers (Lee & Way, 2010).

Major Research Question: How do sports prepare future hospitality managers for constantly changing work environments and

diverse internal and external customers?

2. Self-efficacy and soft skills conceptual framework

Sports have the power to influence collaborative social behaviors and cohesiveness during high-pressure or intense performance conditions (Chelladurai, 1980; Williams et al., 2013a). Hospitality classrooms can manufacture scenarios and examples of work issues to engage students in real life application, but it is hard to simulate dissatisfied internal and external customers; and the hidden pressure of performing to meet daily work objectives. Self-efficacy theory suggests that individuals believe that they can succeed in any given task (Allred, Harrison, & O'Connell, 2013); however, there is a process to developing this positive belief in an unknown future outcome (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy involves the level of confidence within the person, selected behavior, and expected outcome (Bandura, 1977), using feedback that was generated from a sequence of events over long periods of time about familiar patterns needed to produce a particular outcome (Baum, 1990; Spowart, 2011).

Individuals must be led by leaders who reinforce positive behavior and who inspire beneficial leadership tactics in normal and unique settings prior to the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). It is imperative for role models to model the way before followers develop self-efficacy (Williams et al., 2013a). Individuals can produce self-induce motivators by meticulous goal-setting and constructive feedback that influences and reinforces exceptional behavior (Bandura, 1977). This process transmutes appropriate behavior or action into a stimulus for an expected outcome, to generate the emergence of self-efficacy in an individual (Allred et al., 2013). Self-efficacy falls into the conceptual realm of soft skills; soft skills are the intangible or immeasurable skills that enable an individual with the ability to interact with others in a civil and productive manner (Spowart, 2011). Previous research highlights the importance of youth sports, to the development of a fearlessness attitude approach towards change and to an unlikelihood to become a passive leader from the engagement in playing sports for four years or more (Williams et al., 2013a,b).

The conceptual framework suggests that intramural or varsity sport's participation has the power and structure to develop innate beliefs in one's abilities to succeed in challenging situations. Sport's participation gives students an opportunity to lead and to follow in long periods during sporting events (Chelladurai, 1980), which can be seen as key traits used to develop self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was used to support the conceptual framework throughout this study.

3. Significance/purpose of this study

Classrooms cannot replicate hospitality industry challenges (e.g., effective communication between managers and employees); but today's hospitality graduates are expected to enter this convoluted workforce with industry-ready soft skills (e.g., confidence, leadership, and/or problem-solving skills) (Hertzman, Moreo, & Wiener, 2015). The purpose of this research was to explore sport experiences of 11 hospitality professionals who played sports while completing a hospitality degree and its impact on their self-efficacy development. The study's significance is that internships have been around for decades, but soft skill development still seems to be a major issue of concern for hospitality leaders (Sisson & Adams, 2013). Sports might be an effective way to introduce students to pressure-filled situations and to fine-tune their self-efficacy maturation, which falls in the realm of soft skills. Hospitality students must be provided with multiple ways to learn and to develop their self-efficacy or soft skills rather than relying merely on internships and classroom instruction (Spowart, 2011).

4. Literature review

4.1. Hospitality does not exist without soft skills

Soft skills are crucial to conflict management and employee maturation (Weber, Crawford, Lee, & Dennison, 2013). Hospitality leaders are expected to mitigate personnel issues or confrontations while encouraging and inspiring employees to bring their best performance to demanding work environments (Sisson & Adams, 2013). Yet, hospitality leaders identified personal skills, social skills, and learning skills as essential skill sets required for the labour market demands (Caruana & Mcpherson, 2014); more specifically, employees who are resilient, team-oriented, creative, empathetic, organized, and informative (Caruana & Mcpherson, 2014). Collectively, those skills represent the concept of soft skills, and hospitality leaders are in constant search of graduates who possess the following soft skills: team work, problem solving, self-management, leadership, interpersonal and communication, and the ability to take initiative and follow instructions (Weber et al., 2013).

Classrooms provide students with an opportunity to broaden their leadership abilities through unintimidating settings (e.g., students are not verbally assaulting them during their presentations) (Mayo & Thomas-Haysbert, 2005). Classrooms offer safe learning environments were leadership is quasi coached or guided by caring professors or instructors (Weber et al., 2013). Hospitality curriculums are challenged with the daunting tasks of edifying pupils with industry-related concepts and hard skills, while attempting to build on those much needed soft skills (Fidgeon, 2010). Some hospitality programs are utilizing experiential learning and activities outside of the classroom to promote the development of soft skills, such as industry field trips or job shadowing (Baum, 1990; Horton, Foucar-Szocki, & Clark, 2009). Soft skills are constructed from challenges, not non-intensive conditions, such as field trips or informational sessions (Chow et al., 2007; Fidgeon, 2010; Williams et al., 2011).

4.2. Self-efficacy theory provides the foundation of sports

Effectual sport teams consist of team members who take on roles that benefit team objectives and the team's overall goal of winning (Chelladurai, 1980). Self-efficacy is the unadulterated belief that one has the ability to accomplish a goal or task being pursued (Allred et al., 2013). Sports were designed to build confidence that drives individuals to compete to be the best and to achieve excellence from the accomplishment of team goals (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983). Self-efficacy thrives off of individual confidence in one's given ability, an ability that is developed over a significant period of time and with the support of an influential and effective leader or mentor (Allred et al., 2013).

Sports furnishes individuals with consistent and supportive domains within the biological context to permit optimal social interactions, psychological context to probe and analyze the emotional state of beings, and social context to influence one's maturation though culture and upbringing (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983). Sports can extend the learning process beyond the structured walls of classrooms, to potentially tap into self-efficacy through sporting events that last an hour or two at time. These individuals develop a sense of confidence to perform effectively and efficiently in their team roles, and these roles can change drastically from each sporting event (Allred et al., 2013). However, even though team roles alter, these individuals remain in structured environments that encourage consistent confidence, and behavior with an expected outcome in high-pressure situations (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy permits their individual beliefs to