

BENEFITS OF TEAM SPORT FOR ORGANISATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Some people experience their work as meaningful, while others experience work as hard labour. One thing is certain: work is an important part of our lives. Work adds value to an individual in the form of self-actualisation, security and relationships. The purpose of this research was to explore employees' experiences of the benefits of organisational team sport activities. The qualitative exploration study was conducted with employees (N=26) of two financial organisations that participate in organisational team sport. The data were collected by means of focus group interviews and follow-up interviews. The results indicated that a strong bond was established between employees in the organisation during organisational team sport activities. Employees' work values, i.e. self-actualisation, security and relationships improved which, in turn, led to perceptions of increased productivity. Organisational team sport should furthermore be considered as a vehicle for improving trust, respect, commitment, friendships and communication between employees. The contributions that organisational team sport makes to an organisation are all requirements for an effective workforce.

Key words: Communication; Commitment; Trust; Respect; Support; Friends; Cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

Some people experience their work as meaningful, while others experience work as meaningless. One thing is certain – work is an important part of our lives. Work gives value to a person's life in the form of self-actualisation (learning, autonomy, self-confidence), security (support, trust, respect) and relationships (friendships, social contact, membership) (Morin, 2004). Which possible activities can organisations implement to add value to their employees' lives? Organisational team sport might be considered as such an activity to implement. Sport has been defined as “a human activity capable of achieving results that require physical skill and/or exertion, and which, by its organisation and nature, is competitive” (Chalmers, 2002:22). Some organisations have introduced formal organisational team sport activities, without knowing what effect it has on their employees (Bennett, 2009).

The following definition of an organisational team sport is applicable for the purposes of this article: an organisational team sport activity is an employee activity, specifically introduced in an organisation to facilitate participation by the employees as well as the attainment of

common goals. The purpose of the study reported in this article was to explore the possible benefits of organisational team sport activities in organisations.

LITERATURE SURVEY

Organisational team sport participation has been observed to improve attitudes and relationships within the organisation. The contribution that sport makes to effective diversity management in an organisation will be discussed below:

Individual commitment

Organisational team sport participation improves individual commitment because it requires the participant to remain focused on specific goals. A certain level of commitment is required, whether it is to improve certain skills, to be present for training, or to abstain from other non-related activities (Cashmore, 2003). Commitment causes participants to organise their behaviour according to a specific programme, for example, to adhere to a prescribed exercise programme and diet, which requires sacrifice (Cashmore, 2003). The underlying laws that ensure the performance of teams are also applicable to individual employees in the workplace. The team teaches its members to persevere and this value is transferred to the workplace. Good teamwork also entails rigorous preparation. This is also transferred to the individual employed who then plans well and trains to acquire the competence (Levi, 2001).

Cohesion in a team

Team cohesiveness is a dynamic process that reflects the tendency of a group of people to bond and remain united in their search for common goals and objectives (Cashmore, 2003). Cohesiveness is associated with a team's togetherness, be it on or off the field. According to Jowell (2004), culture and sport can both be used to build community cohesion. Activities such as football afford people opportunities to come together and participate in community life. Jowell (2004) goes on to explain that a community is cohesive when there is a common goal and vision and a sense of belonging, and strong relationships are developed between diverse people in neighbourhoods, schools and the workplace. According to Bassett-Jones (2005) every employee needs to commit to cooperating with other employees in their workplace because lack of personal commitment results in low morale, absenteeism and loss of production. Organisations that can facilitate personal commitment among their employees will give themselves a basis for competitive advantage (Nieman & Bennett, 2002; Bassett-Jones, 2005).

Mutual trust among employees

When individuals participate in a team sport they learn more about one another. Moreover, when a sport team works together towards common goals and these are achieved, the stereotyping and prejudices that participants might have had about their team members will decrease. Simultaneously, mutual trust develops because the participants perform according to the expectations their team members have of them. A high level of mutual trust among team members will also improve the effectiveness of the team (Kortex, 2006). If employees from different backgrounds collaborate as a team and mutual trust develops, they soon recognise the unimportance of previous obsessions with differences (Muleskinner, 2003).

Mutual respect among employees

Organisational team sport participation improves mutual respect among employees because participants learn to value each participant's contribution to the success (Downs, 2009). When each participant's contribution in the team sport is highly regarded, the outcome is mutual respect, but when the participants do not make the required contribution, less respect is generated. Team sport teaches employees that each participant has his own specific role and that team members need to respect one another to enable them to fulfil the role assigned to them (Downs, 2009). This important evidence provides an argument that sport skills in teams can be transferred to the workplace.

Inter-employee communication

Organisational team sport participation improves communication between employees because in a sport team people have to communicate effectively in order for the team to perform. Effective communication binds people together, despite differences in their culture, economic status, religious beliefs or background. Effective communication also breaks down barriers, which is important when integrating different cultures and norms (Carrigg, 2007). Research conducted by the Australian Sports Commission (AIS) has shown that effective communication during team sport participation also breaks down ethnic, political and social barriers (Oam, 2009).

Employees' interpersonal knowledge of other employees

Organisational team sport participation enhances employees' knowledge of others because they share the same physical space and transfer information. According to Muleskinner (2003), sport participation can strengthen friendships and bring harmony between groups. Lapchick (2005) is of the opinion that organisational team sport can be used as an effective tool to gain information on other employees and effect positive social change.

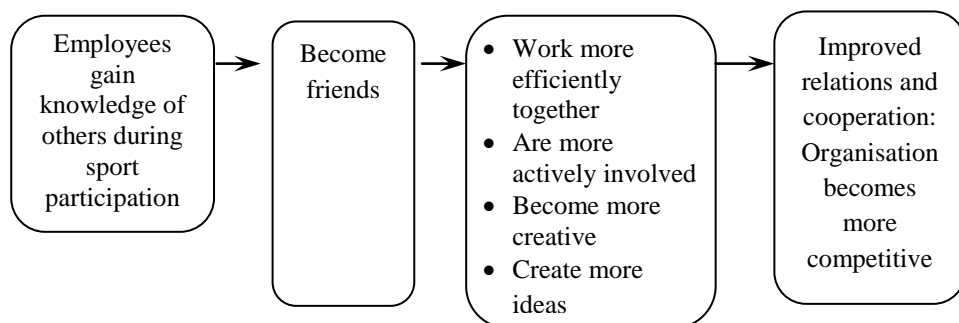


FIGURE 1: ADVANTAGES OF INTERPERSONAL KNOWLEDGE GAINED THROUGH SPORT PARTICIPATION

The advantages to the organisation of the knowledge gained through sport participation are presented in Figure 1, which is a summary and illustration of the effect of organisational team sport. Through team sport, employees are encouraged to understand one another, work

together (task cohesion) and make friends (social cohesion). Employees who share knowledge, time and space with one another usually become friends. Friends, who communicate well with one another and are in harmony, normally work well together. Employees who are also friends with one another will be more productive in the workplace, because they communicate, socialise and share common goals. To summarise, when managers are willing to afford their employees time to participate in organisational team sport, they enhance the organisation's effectiveness, because it improves knowledge of other employees (Business-Building Information, n.d.).

IMPORTANT CASE STUDIES

A number of studies confirm the important contribution of organisational team sport to the organisation. Two relevant case studies are presented.

Case study 1: Impact of sport on the United Kingdom (UK) workplace

The Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC) conducted a study that assessed the impact of success and failure in sport in the workplace (Chandler, 2006). The findings were derived from data obtained from one-on-one interviews and focus groups from a national sample of 2000 people. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 70. Quantitative and qualitative research was applied in a study to determine the impact of sport on the UK workplace.

The study showed that a total of 52% of the women and 63% of the men reported that success in sport (to be part of a winning team) had a positive influence on their approach to work. A total of 40% of the men and 47% of the women stated that success in sport helped them to be more productive at work. However, only 12% of the women and 20% of the men indicated that participation in sport had transferred to improved motivation at work. A minority of 30% of the total sample reported that their success in sport had a negative influence and made them less productive (Chandler, 2006). Additional findings of the study were that 53% of the men and 16% of the women stated that they discussed sport with their colleagues almost every day. In addition, 24% of the women indicated that they used conversations about sport to become more accepted in work-related conversations. Of the respondents, 30% reported that sport conversations allowed them to communicate more effectively with their colleagues. Finally, 18% of the men and 8% of the women indicated that sport conversations broke down the hierarchical barriers with their managers and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) (Chandler, 2006). The main inference from Chandler's study is that sport in general has a positive influence on work behaviour in organisations. The relevance of Chandler's (2006) findings to this study will be discussed at the end of the literature review.

Case study 2: Influence of sport participation on work success

In a study conducted by Standard Chartered Bank (Sawer, 2007), it was found that employees who participate in a team sport, such as soccer or netball, are more successful than non-participants in their work. In this study it was found that fast-growing organisations have significantly more employees who participate in organisational team sport than slower-growing organisations. This may indicate that the employees who participate in sport in general have higher energy levels and that this also leads to more rapid organisational growth. It was noted that employees participating in sport are generally more motivated to improve

the organisation's productivity and performance. Sawyer's (2007) research indicates that there is a significant, positive correlation between team sport participation and benefits for the organisation. The findings in this study were that a total of 48% of the participants agreed that their participation in a team sport had improved the relationship between employees and management. Of the participants, 80% reported that they had become better acquainted with other employees from different departments.

The purpose of the studies cited was to demonstrate the benefits of team sport for organisations. According to Chandler (2006) the benefits of team sport for organisations are improved production, improved motivation at work, the breakdown of hierarchical barriers and creating common ground for cooperation. Sawyer (2007) also confirms that the benefits of team sport for organisations are that sport participants are more successful in their work because they have higher energy levels, are more motivated and it improves relationships between colleagues.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

This study follows on the studies of Chandler (2006) and Sawyer's (2007) by also exploring the benefits of organisational team sport within organisations in South Africa. The purpose of this study was therefore to identify the benefits that organisational action netball may have for employees from two financial institutions in Gauteng. The research question, therefore, was whether organisational team sport, in this case action netball, holds any benefits for the employees and the two financial organisations where the research was conducted.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

A qualitative approach was applied in this exploratory study. Qualitative methods applied give meaning to and interpret the employees' experience of the benefits that team sport has for their organisations. This is difficult to achieve if the researchers only use quantitative methods (Rice & Ezzy, 2002). This qualitative design encourages the discovery of new insights and ideas and necessitates a flexible approach. The approach followed in this research and presented in this article entails the interpretive paradigm (Saunders *et al.*, 2009), as the researchers had to understand the way in which the participants interpreted their experiences about their participation in organisational team sport activities and what effect they perceive it had on their relationships, trust and respect for one another.

Research procedure

Participants from two financial organisations were approached to participate. Trustworthiness can be improved by spending adequate time with the participants (Krefting, 1991). Trustworthiness was therefore enhanced in this study because one of the researchers has played team sport (netball) for more than eight years, has personal experience of the benefits of team sport for the organisations and was also known to some of the participants working in the financial organisation. This was conducive to establishing a good working relationship between the researcher and the participants. After the focus groups, individual follow-up

interviews were conducted with some of the participants who were present at the focus groups, but who did not actively participate during these focus groups, to clarify possible inhibiting factors that they could have experienced during the focus group interviews. This was done to ensure that they agreed with the responses gained from the focus groups. Data saturation occurred during the focus groups and further data gathering was therefore not considered necessary.

Population

Players participating in an action netball team and working at a financial institution in Pretoria comprised the research population for this study. Two different financial institutions were selected for this research. A sample of convenience was used because the participants met the requirements for inclusion and were readily available.

Sample

A purposive participant technique was used to identify the participants (N=26) for the focus group interviews. To be included in the purposive sample, the participants had to meet both of the following criteria: they had to work for the financial institution and play in an action netball team for the institution. The first focus group consisted of eight women players (a full netball team and one reserve). The second focus group consisted of seven players (five men and two women) and the third focus group consisted of nine players (four men and five women) (a full netball team and two reserves). To ensure adequate representation, three focus groups were interviewed. The first focus group was a homogenous group and the last two focus groups were a mixed team. Traditionally, netball has been seen as a game for women only, but teams in which both men and women participate are becoming more popular, especially when netball is played indoors (action netball) (Drummond, 2009). The second and third focus groups therefore consisted of a mixed team to gain new insights and determine whether there are additional advantages in the mixed teams that were not in the homogenous group.

Data collection

Tesch (1990) points out that qualitative research can be conducted exclusively through words, because words are used in language and language is used for communication. Words are used to interpret the information. In this study, verbatim data from the focus group interviews were collected through tape recordings that were transcribed. The data from the focus group interviews were typed in one-and-a-half spacing with wide margins to enable the researchers to make written comments and notes. Recurring ideas and themes and important concepts were collected from the transcript. According to Rice and Ezzy (2002), a focus group is especially useful when a researcher wishes to explore and describe participants' experience and knowledge. Focus group interviews were used to obtain a more in-depth response as the participants knew each other and they had the liberty to differ from the other participants and to give their own views and ideas. A time was set and the focus group interviews were conducted in a boardroom, which was an undisturbed area at the participants' workplace. Each focus group interview took approximately an hour to complete.

Guided focus group interviews were used in this study. The focus group interviews were semi-structured because guided focus group interviews consist of setting broad objectives that are reflected in guiding questions. The participants were encouraged to describe their experiences and views in a particular situation and the interviewer explored any matter that arose (Grbich, 1999). This balanced type of focus group interviews made it possible to attain the research goal, namely is participation in an organisational team sport beneficial to the workplace? The use of guiding and open-ended questions simultaneously afforded the participants the opportunity to express themselves freely (Hein, 1980). Participants sometimes find videotaping distracting, while tape recordings appear to be acceptable (Grbich, 1999). The researcher used a reliable tape recorder in a quiet environment (Kvale, 1996). Field notes were compiled that contained information about the focus group interviews, the setting and personal feelings and impressions.

The participants work in different departments and are on different hierarchical levels. The interview questions posed during the focus groups, to enable the researchers to collect the data for the study, are presented below:

You are all playing in a sport team.

What have you experienced from this team?

What are the disadvantages when playing together in a sport team?

Do these disadvantages prevent you from playing together in one team?

What are the advantages of participating in a sport team with co-workers?

Do you know the other teams' (of that specific organisation) netball players?

Do you watch the other teams and support them when they are playing on the court?

Do you think that organisations need to use sport in the organisation?

Do you think that sport is time-consuming and that the company will lose productivity because of the time spent on sport events?

Do you talk about sport in the workplace?

The same questions were asked during the follow-up interviews with the participants who did not respond during the focus groups. This ensured that the same area of inquiry was covered in both the focus groups and the individual follow-up interviews.

Data analysis

Recurring themes and important concepts were identified from the transcript. The data-gathering process proposed by Tesch (1990) was applied. This entailed that the identified themes could be categorised into a smaller number of broader groups. After the completion of the transcript, it was reviewed to identify any themes or concepts that had not initially been noted. Similarities and variations in data from different focus groups were noted (Lobiondo-Wood & Haber, 1994). The data were stored at the researcher's office/home. The participants remained anonymous.

Ethical considerations

A number of steps were taken to ensure ethical procedure. Prior to their participation in the study, written informed consent of each participant was obtained (Silverman, 2002). Focus group interviews were conducted in privacy, and confidentiality was maintained by ensuring

that the data were available to the researchers only. None of the employees at the financial organisations had access to the data and the participants also remained anonymous.

Characteristics of the participants

The participants in the study were represented by 65% women and 35% men. Almost half of the participants (46%) were between the ages of 20 and 25, and 15% between the ages of 26 and 30. Only 12% of the participants were between the ages of 31 and 35; 15% between the ages of 36 and 40; and 12% between the ages of 41 and 45. The average age of all the participants was 29.11 and the standard deviation was 7.10. From the indicated average age of the participants and the standard deviation, it is apparent that the participants were relatively young. Most of the participants were Afrikaans-speaking (69%). Only 12% of the participants were English-speaking while the remaining participants spoke an African language. The participants were all from different occupational levels, namely (% rounded) 8% business analysts; 8% lead agents; 4% financial planners; 4% financial controllers; 8% personal assistants; 4% admin coordinators, 4% financial advisors; 4% system developers; 4% administration staff; 4% development managers; 8% actuaries; 4% service consultants; 4% involved in internal services; 11% accountants; 11% actuarial students; 4% consultants; 4% sales advisors; and 4% involved in client care. The job designations were fairly equally represented, with the highest representation of actuarial students (11%) and accounts staff (11%).

The participants were also from different departments, namely (% rounded) 4% in risk implementation department; 4% in myriad department; 15% in sales department; 4% in finance department; 8% in risk and savings department; 4% in short term sales department; 4% in distribution services department; 8% in information technology department; 4% in membership department; 4% in corporate department; 4% in client services department; 4% in internal services department; 27% in financial administration services department - portfolio accounts; 4% in aspire department; and 4% in business department. The highest departmental representation was in the financial administration services department - portfolio accounts (27%). The rest of the departmental representations were fairly equally distributed

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Employee experiences when participating in organisational team sport with co-workers

The disadvantages that the participants experienced were the difference in character, language and age. A probing question was asked whether these disadvantages prevented the participants from playing effectively together in one team. The answers obtained from this probing question were:

“Since I started to play netball, there was never anything about too young, so you cannot play in my team, or you cannot throw a ball. We play as a team and if we don’t communicate, this team will go nowhere.”

“No, because through action netball we became friends even if we are different.”

“I don’t think so, because we play in the same team and we always have something to talk about, even if we speak different languages.”

TABLE 1: DISADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATING IN AN ORGANISATIONAL TEAM SPORT

Questions: <i>You are all playing in a sports team. What have you experienced from this team? What are the disadvantages when playing in a sports team?</i>	
Results	Confirmation
Differences in character	"... the different players' character. I like to shout on the court when we play a game to encourage the other players, but someone else doesn't like it and they all of a sudden stop and don't give their best, whilst other people have a boost when I shout and encourage them on the court."
Language differences	"Language can be a barrier because we are used to shouting in Afrikaans on the court but half the time, I sometimes forget that __ and __ are English." "My biggest constraint would be language because it is difficult"
Age differences	"Because I am almost the eldest, I think age can also be a constraint because I am not as fast as the other young players and when I have an injury it will not heal as quickly as other youngster's injuries."

The participants agreed that the disadvantages mentioned, did not play a major role in their sport team. They became friends and through open communication they were able to overcome age and language.

TABLE 2: ADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATING IN AN ORGANISATIONAL TEAM SPORT

Question: <i>What are the advantages of participating in a sports team with co-workers?</i>	
Results	Confirmation
Trust and respect	"We also ensure that we are on time for the games. The team needs us and we need them. We trust and respect one another". "You learn more about each other and when you understand a person and you know a person or when you are willing to go the extra mile, things immediately will become better, the trust issue and the respect issue". "We are very close knit. We depend on each other in the team. Trust is very big in our team".
Support of others	"We do get more support from one another if you play together in a team. Now if you walk up and down the hall you see people that you play netball with, you will find that there is always something that you can talk about."
Open / improved communication	"It [sport] definitely enables a more open communication than we had before the time. When we played the departmental games, it made a big difference to communication. You can work with a person who sits next to you for 5 years and never really speak to him if you don't do anything outside work together." "Because we play in the same team, we don't just walk past them what we would have done if we have not played in the same team. We actually stop and start a conversation. Just to hear how it goes. We always have something to talk about, even if it was last night's game."
Relationships / improved friends	"... the people were on higher levels than me, so you greet one another, but that is all, but when you play sport together, everyone was almost like on equal level, I mean, we had more of an upper hand, because we knew the game and some of them didn't and the 'fights' that broke out were incredible. Everyone wants to play the same positions. And yes, the whole office was more friendly with one another after that." "Sport makes friends that would normally not happen."

TABLE 2 (cont.)

<u>Results</u>	<u>Confirmation</u>
Relationship / improved friends (cont.)	“Well, I wouldn’t know them that well if they didn’t play netball. One of the other netball players that is playing in another team is working in the finance department and if I need something from the finance department, I normally phone him because, regardless of the fact that he knows everything, he became my friend.”
Learn about each other	“We learn more about the other culture’s background.” “Before the departmental challenge, you would walk passed someone and didn’t greet them at all, but after the departmental challenge where you were talking and joking with one another, the next day at work you can actually greet him and have a chat.”
Develops commitment	“We had an inter departmental challenge last week where we played action soccer, action netball, action cricket and volleyball and some co-workers in our department were so good in sport, we never even knew that until we had this inter departmental challenge.” “I learnt a lot from the other people [in the team].” “But what we do is that we practice during the week at a Thursday, after work. We are there for a reason. Even though we do it for fun, there is still commitment.” “We also ensure that we are on time for the games and we don’t practise a lot, but if we do, we make sure that we are there, because the team needs us and we need them.”
Less absenteeism	“And employees are less sick. If you can bring down your absenteeism by 5% you save millions a year. If you sponsor people to stay fit, the company will definitely benefit.”

Participants were also asked whether they knew the other teams’ (of that specific organisation) netball players. The participants reported that they knew them and when they (the other teams) were participating in a game, they would sit next to the court and support them. They also became friends with the participants in the other teams, and when the other teams needed a team player, they would be more than willing to help out. According to one participant, the whole team supported other teams such as rugby, soccer, cricket and volleyball teams, and not only the netball teams. This is evidence of increased task cohesion and social cohesion.

The participants’ perceptions supported the view regarding the advantages listed in Figure 1, which confirms that employees who share knowledge, time and space with one another usually become friends (increased social cohesion). When employees become friends and communicate well with each other and are in harmony, normally work well together and are more productive in the workplace (increased task cohesion). This also confirms the views of Cashmore (2003) that organisational team sport participation improves individual commitment. Kortx (2006) holds that organisational team sport participation improves mutual trust among employees. Downs (2009) contends that organisational team sport participation improves mutual respect between employees. Carrigg (2007) is of the opinion that organisational team sport participation improves inter-employee communication. Muleskinner (2003) confirms that organisation team sport participation enhances employees’ interpersonal knowledge of other employees.

Employee experiences of the importance of sport events in organisations

TABLE 3: BENEFITS OF SPORT EVENTS IN ORGANISATIONS

Question: <i>Do you think that organisations need to use sport in an organisation?</i>	
Results	Confirmation
Trust and respect	<p>"I feel trusted in the netball team as well as in the soccer team."</p> <p>"You learn from one another, there is trust and respect and friendship between the participants."</p>
Support	<p>"To go back to the support, even though we don't work together, if we walk past one another and see that he is down, and he says that it is not going so well, you do support him."</p>
Relationships/ Friends	<p>"... and friendship."</p> <p>"I have to say, me and the girl are now friends and from 1 January I will start to work with her in the same department, so I already have a friend by the time I move in there, so it is quite nice."</p>
Communi- cation	<p>"Regardless whether it is sports, even at work, as I said, it is easier for me to go to one of them since I know them in a way instead of going to someone I never had to deal with in the company before."</p> <p>"Because I know her, I can talk to her about other stuff and not only work, because she knows me on a more personal level."</p>
Learn more about each other	<p>"... and I play soccer with the guys as well, and I mean, I am the only 'whitey' and I would not have gotten to know them as well as I do today, had I not been playing with them in a team."</p> <p>"In terms of sport in companies, especially big companies, there are so many people and you are so busy during the day that you never get the time to know the people you are working with, so things like sport and team outings help a lot, not only in growing yourself, but in knowing your fellow players but also the people who are working with you."</p> <p>"And also when you play with other people in a team you also get to know that person's good behaviour and bad behaviour. You know when they are upset about something and when they are excited. You get to know both sides of the coin instead of just sitting together in an office."</p>

The participants were asked whether they thought that sport was time-consuming and that the company would lose productivity because of the time spent on sport events. At the time of the interviews, the participants were all playing in an action netball team and all their games took place after hours. The participants agreed that when organisational team sport was implemented in organisations the participants felt valued. They were willing to work longer hours and to work towards company success because they were now friends. Sport also increases open communication, support and commitment among employees. The organisations do not lose production time. The converse is actually true: the company gains more from employees who participate in sport with each other.

The participants' perceptions once again supported the view regarding the advantages listed in Figure 1, which confirms that employees who share knowledge, time and space with one

another usually become friends. Their perceptions again confirmed the view of Cashmore (2003) that organisational team sport participation improves individual commitment. It also conferred with Kortex (2006) who reported that organisational team sport participation improves mutual trust among employees. The findings supported Downs' (2009) view that organisational team sport participation improves mutual respect between employees. The findings of Carrigg (2007) that organisational team sport participation improves inter-employee communication were supported by the results of this study and Muleskinner's (2003) view that organisation team sport participation enhances employees' interpersonal knowledge of other employees was supported.

The participants' perceptions about the advantages of being able to conduct conversations about sport were that it breaks down barriers, it was a common ground, people connected and it was seen as an icebreaker. The participants' views are supported by Bernstein *et al.* (2008) who confirmed that a multigenerational workplace can effectively be managed when individuals are willing to find a common ground. Johnson (2008) confirmed this statement by adding that sport is a perfect icebreaker in many organisations, especially when teams have no other common ground. It also confirmed the findings of Chandler (2006) that sport conversations allow the respondents to communicate more effectively with their colleagues and it also breaks down the hierarchical barriers with their managers and CEO's.

TABLE 4: ADVANTAGES OF BEING ABLE TO CONDUCT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SPORT

Question: <i>Do you talk about sport in the workplace?</i>	
Results	Confirmation
Breaks down barriers	"When you talk about sport, it always breaks that initial barrier."
Common ground	"When you talk about sport it is a common ground and usually sport falls nicely into that."
People connect	"It is nice to talk about sport, Sport makes people connect."
Ice breaker	"Just to break the ice."

The main findings of this study can be summarised as follows:

- Organisational team sport (action netball) holds distinct advantages for employees and the organisation.
- There are virtually no disadvantages emanating from the playing of action netball as organisational team sport in the organisations.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study reported in this article was to explore the benefits that organisational team sport activities might have for organisations. The focus of this study was on the employees in two financial organisations participating in a team sport.

The results indicated that in the experience of the participants a strong bond was established between employees in the organisation during organisational team sport. The participants reported that their trust, respect, support, communication and friendships increased, which in turn enhanced the employees' work values, namely trust and respect, support, open communication, relationships, commitment, less absenteeism and they learned more about each other. Discussions about sport were seen as a common ground and were used as icebreakers. It helped people to connect. When an organisation uses formally organised team sport to improve trust, respect, commitment, friendships and communication among its workforce, it seems to compel employees to focus on their similarities instead of their differences. The decline in the focus on differences could enhance the competence of employees in the organisation, because the organisation sport teams are united in working towards mutual goals. Comparisons of this outcome could not be made with non-participants and this could be followed up with further research.

Although the participants experienced some minor constraints, they confirmed that participation in sport had several benefits, namely making friends, experiencing increased support, an increase in commitment, trust and respect, increased open communication and they learned more about each other. The participants' perceptions of the benefits of participating in team sport with co-workers concurred with similar findings in the literature.

If employees from an organisation can improve their cooperation by participating in organisational team sport, this should also improve the organisation's competitiveness. The researcher interviewed only those participants who played in a netball team. Several other sport such as hockey, cricket, soccer, rugby and volleyball should also be considered as team sports that may contribute in the same manner as action netball. When employees participate together in organisational team sport activities, they should experience their work, which is an important part of their lives, as more meaningful and fulfilling.

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