**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Sporting programs aimed at inactive population groups in the Netherlands: factors influencing their long-term sustainability in the organized sports setting

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 04 Jul 2019

**Reviewer:** Carl-Philipp Jansen

**Reviewer's report:**

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This is a well-written study with interesting insights into organized sport's views on program implementation and long-term success (i.e., sustainability). The authors have done a good job in terms of a clear rationale and theoretical foundation of the work, a clear structure of the manuscript, solid methodological conduct and analysis. With few exceptions, most of my comments refer to minor issues which I provide below. Some of the results are rather obvious (e.g., that social relationships and having fun are reasons to keep attending, Lines 284-287; high program costs or no external funding as reasons for cessation for a program, lines 301-304; importance of the trainer/coach, lines 348 ff.), so there are only few results that may actually provide new knowledge. This is nothing that can be changed, but means a somewhat smaller "value" of the research at hand.

One of the few major comments is that I am uncertain regarding the generalizability of the findings on other countries where different organizational and cultural structures and backgrounds are given. To solve this matter and to make it clear to readers that these results may not be transferable to any country (i.e., Eastern societies, South America, …), I suggest including the nationality of the study in the title. It could read: "Sporting program for inactive population groups in the Netherlands: …".

Another major question I have is how it was determined whether the participants had been previously inactive or not?! I would expect that every person interested in the programs would have been allowed to participate. If that was the case, it is not possible to singularly reduce your results on inactive subjects, especially retrospectively. An explanation how these subjects were determined and "chosen" is needed here. Related to that point is that subjects who had been previously inactive make a transition from "inactive" o "active" as soon as they enter a program. This means that the program needs to be sustainable for active (!) persons, not for inactive ones, as the active persons are the ones that need to be kept participating. This is a linguistic and a textual issue: making a sports program sustainable for inactive persons is basically impossible in this case because they are active persons as soon as they participate. This needs to be addressed in the paper and also in the title. Changes need to be made accordingly.
Abstract

Line 10: "sustained". It should be clear in the abstract whether sustained refers to the participants' sustainable participation or the sports clubs' sustainable offer of the program.

Line 17: Include method of interviews here: semi-standardized (as I found rather late in the manuscript).

Background

Line 59: There is research showing that, depending on the age group, participation in standardized training (such as groups or gyms) often leads to drop-out of participants after about half a year (on average). It should be addressed here that sports clubs may be an alternative for some people, but it should also be acknowledged that there are others who would absolutely not participate in that kind of sports or exercise.

Line 64: it should read: "...who are not being active and who are on low...".

Line 71: how was their inactivity determined (see comment above). And I think you should use other wording: hockey for inactive seniors is misleading, because there are actively doing it. Maybe say: for previously inactive seniors.

Line 78: delete "in".

Methods

Line 112: Why 6.5 years? Are there references referring to this number? Why was that time window chosen? Or was this a convenience decision? Please explain?

Line 118: "de" - should be "the"?

Line 118: "Accordingly" seems misplaced here. I cannot find a reason for adding these studies in the previous passage. I suggest deleting "accordingly" or explaining what is meant here.

Line 132-134: This belongs to the procedures section, not sample.

Line 137: "sent", not "send".

Line 161: It should be mentioned earlier that the interviews were semi-structured.
Line 186: "Research groups" is misleading. You participants are not research groups, but a study population. You yourself are part of a research group.

Results

Line 277: It should say: "You have to offer people something."

Line 283: I guess you mean "tea", not "thee"?

Lines 339-340: It would be interesting to know for the readers how these inactive people were contacted/reached. You state yourself that this posed a major problem for trainers. What can be learned from this program regarding recruitment of inactive people?

Line 363: The organizations' core values.

Line 416: avoid using "elderly". This term is not fashionable anymore, I suggest using "older".

Line 417: "facilitated" is rather odd. You mean "support"? Same as in line 424. You could also use "encourage".

Figure 1: Large part of the legend is identical with passages in the text. Please avoid redundancies.

Discussion

Lines 482ff. Here the same problem as above; those people are not inactive anymore. Rather than "align the program with the needs of the inactive target group", it should be that the program is aligned with the constant improvement and progress of the "newly active" but formerly inactive participants.

Line 494: "elderly" again.

Line 510-511: no hivens "," needed here.

Line 525: Something you have to appraise critically is that it remains unclear from your study which of the factors are more important than others. You briefly address this point in line 570, but I think it deserves more attention.

Line 551: "making results generalizable" - this is only true for the Netherlands. See my comment above. You have to take this into account.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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