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WHAT MANAGERIAL APPROACHES DO TENNIS CLUBS USE TO PREVENT DROP OUT AMONGST ADOLESCENT FEMALE TENNIS PLAYERS?

(Dissertation submitted under the Management and Development area)

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Abstract

This paper explored managerial approaches within tennis clubs and aimed to gather an understanding of how these approaches were used within clubs to retain adolescent female tennis players. The study looked at current club structures and future improvements that managers/ head coaches could make. It also looked into the reasons behind adolescent drop out in sport.

This qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Four interviews took place and each participant was specifically selected due to their knowledge and experience within tennis. The data collected from the four participants was analysed thematically to produce the following themes; adolescent female drop out in sport, adolescent female drop out in tennis, coaches in tennis, the LTA on retaining adolescent females, views on girls only tennis initiative "Miss-hits", club's approach to retain adolescent females and improvements the club could make to improve the scope for adolescent females.

Results illustrated that managers and head coaches should work in conjunction with each other to implement ideas such as utilising new technology, finding ways to reduce the cost to play, and ensuring lessons are more attractive to adolescent females in the hope to reduce drop out.

The paper contributes to the debates surrounding adolescent female drop out in sport and in particular, tennis. Not only is the study concerned with adolescent female drop out in tennis, it also specifically looks into managerial approaches that clubs can adopt to prevent the decline in female participation.

Key Words: Tennis, Qualitative, Management, Participation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Study

Research has identified that the participation rates of adolescent females are significantly lower than those of adolescent males (Brown and Blanton, 2002, Hylton, 2013). The Active People Survey (2015) outlines that only 22.3% of females aged 16 and above are taking part in regular physical activity at least three times a week, proving considerably lower than that of adolescent males (39.5%). Hylton (2013) argues that the drop off stage begins when students are leaving school and further considers how changes in infrastructure and policies within school sport such as interventions and schemes can have a knock on effect in relation to drop out and participation amongst adolescents.

Many initiatives have been put in place to encourage adolescent females to participate in regular sport and physical activity such as Sport England's 'This Girl Can' campaign and Wales's 5x60 initiative (This Girl Can, 2015, Climbing Higher, 2005). Although England and Wales have clear policy outcomes related to participation, the number of adolescent females taking part in regular physical activity per week is averaging a disappointing 21% from years 2005-2015 (Active People Survey, 2015).

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the national governing body for tennis and has been accused of being overly focused on competition and producing professional players as opposed to increasing participation and awareness (Lake, 2010). Consequently, it has been argued that an over-emphasis on competition can result in drop out amongst young tennis players, in particular girls (Kattan, 2006). Further research identified additional factors that can promote drop out in tennis such as coaches, parental involvement and lack of motivation (Lee, 2002, Rowe, 2011). This study aims to identify reasons behind adolescent female drop out in tennis whilst investigating different approaches managers and head coaches can implement within tennis clubs to effectively retain adolescent female tennis players. Managerial approaches will be investigated and looked into within clubs to help identify ways to

retain adolescent female tennis players. Opinions on current LTA initiatives such as 'Miss-Hits' will be discussed and analysed as well as ways that managers and head coaches aim to attract more adolescent females into the sport. The outcome of the study is to help managers and head coaches implement effective approaches and strategies to retain adolescent female tennis players and identify any improvements that can be made within their club to maximise their potential of achieving this outcome.

1.2 Key Terms

The key terms outlined within this study are managerial approaches and adolescent females. Managerial approaches are put in place to accomplish organisational goals in the hope of promoting growth and generating a better understanding of human behaviour, focussing on a certain environment (Meredith and Mantel, 2010). Additionally, adolescent females relate to women who are between the ages of 16 and 18 years old (Hylton, 2013).

The overall aim of this study was to uncover reasons as to why adolescent females drop out of tennis and as a result, how managers and head coaches can facilitate this and provide an approach which increases participation and retention. The study intends to improve the scope for adolescent female players within tennis clubs and help managers implement an approach that is not only sustainable, but an effective and flexible way to prevent adolescent female drop out.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, a wide range of literature will be reviewed regarding managerial approaches to adolescent female drop out in tennis. The main purpose of this chapter is to investigate ways in which tennis clubs can effectively manage drop out and therefore retain female players from a young age, promoting lifelong involvement. Firstly, the review will look into generic reasons surrounding adolescent female drop out in sport, further discussing school sport and the impact of young people's PE and available opportunities during their further education, supported by current initiatives in England and Wales. Managerial strategies within other sports as well as tennis will then be looked at in order to understand how these sports specifically manage adolescent female drop out and to therefore identify similarities and differences within a club's structure and approach.

2.2 Participation, Drop out and School Sport Strategies

During the 1945-64 period, there was no government sport policy before the war, resulting in issues surrounding youth alienation, poor sport infrastructure, and a severe lack of investment (The Central Council of Physical Recreation, 1960). In 1960, The Wolfenden Committee identified a 'gap' within participation amongst adults and school children, highlighting the issue surrounding post-school drop out, becoming famously known as the 'Wolfenden Gap' (The Central Council of Physical Recreation, 1960). Brackenridge and Woodward (1994) identified that the amount of youths who drop out of sport is just as evident today as it was in 1960 when it was first identified, especially amongst girls. It was stated that this 'gap' needed to be addressed in order to strengthen sports policy and retain more young people in sport, posing an ongoing challenge for sport in the United Kingdom (Bloyce et al, 2008).

It is clear that drop outs amongst adolescent females is a current debate creating a growing concern and a universal problem for sport (Brookes and Magnusson, 2006). Current statistics from the Active People Survey outline that only 36% of the population aged sixteen and over are taking part in exercise at least once a week (Sport England, 2015). Hylton (2013) defines participation as simply the action of taking part in something. Existing research into participation in sport among adolescents has undoubtedly shown a significant decline in the number of young people who do not take part in regular physical activity (Brown and Blanton, 2002, Eime et al, 2013, Hylton, 2013). Burrows (2012) argues that adolescent drop out stems through social influence of peers. Deabreu (2012) supports this and suggests that adolescent drop out can be affected by not only social influences, but a combination of psychological, physical and religious factors. Research by Kirshnit et al (1989) found that adolescents avoided organised sport because they found the activities less enjoyable, drawing particular attention to gender differences as participation rates declined when females were in a mixed gender environment.

Hylton (2013) argues that the drop off stage instigates when students are leaving school, drawing particular interest to the impact of PE and Sport Strategies for Young People (PESSYP) and therefore the sporting opportunities available to them. PESSYP has built on the PE Sports Strategies and Club Links (PESSCL) approach which is supported by a large investment given to improve the quality and quantity of PE and sport providing two hours of high quality PE per week to all young people aged 5-19, as well as offering an additional three hours per week involving further sporting activities (Bloyce, 2009). The Youth Sports Trust is a charitable scheme developed to build brighter futures for young people up to the age of 19 through creating opportunities which are sport and activity based, aiming to enhance levels of participation and enjoyment through quality resources and coaching (Bloyce and Smith, 2009). Successful PESS will help develop a working link between schools and communities as well as introduce a more competitive aspect through the delivery of interventions such as the School Games (Hylton, 2013).

However, PESS, PESSYP and PESSCL all rely heavily on qualified and experienced teachers, coaches and volunteers in order to be effective and provide a positive experience for adolescents (Hylton, 2013). It is therefore vital that close attention is paid to young people in order to encourage a love for sport at an early age, promoting lifelong participation in order to reap the many benefits that arise from being fit and healthy (Sport New Zealand, 2015).

Wales offer a 5x60 initiative for secondary school children which aims to get all youth participating in 60 minutes of physical activity, five times a week (Sport Wales, 2015). Changes in the current infrastructure and policies within sport outline the importance of having achievable targets such as the Welsh Assembly Government aiming to ensure that at least 90% of boys and girls within secondary schools participate in sport as well as provide curricular and extracurricular based activities every week (Climbing Higher, 2005). Burrows (2012) makes it clear that female friendship groups who keep active together are more likely to stay involved for longer. It cannot be assumed that sports will attract males and females in the same way, hence the reason why the 5x60 scheme is effective as it gives young females a choice in which sports they want to partake in such as street dance (Brindley, 2011).

Likewise, England's sport policy document outlines an overall plan to get more people taking up sport, offering 5 –16 year olds five hours of PE and sport each week and 16 –19 year olds three hours of sport each week, as well as hoping to expand the pool of talent, increasing the likelihood of winning medals on a world stage (Playing to Win, 2008). Although one of England's policy outcomes includes increasing sports participation for young people (Mackintosh and Liddle, 2015), there is a clear focus on competition which existing literature has suggested could promote drop out due to a lack of enjoyment associated with an overemphasis on winning, as well as coach conflicts and clashes of interest (Fraser-Thomas and Deakin, 2008, Gallucci, 2013).

Whilst further research suggests that a lack of interest, competence, and time are all major factors within adolescent drop outs amongst girls (Slater and Tiggemann, 2010), Kattan (2006) identified physical changes in young females to be the most common driver of negative experience within sport, having a knock-on effect with regards to sporting performance and participation levels. Additional concerns adolescent females may feel towards physical activity consist of teasing, appearance, and image whilst playing sport (Slater and Tiggemann, 2010). In attempt to alleviate these barriers, Sport England came up with a campaign called 'This Girl Can' in order to diminish fears of inadequacy in sports and encourage all women and girls no matter their ability or background to get more active and have fun doing so (Evans, 2006, This Girl Can, 2015).

2.3 Other Sport's Responses to Adolescent Participation and Retention

Bloyce and Smith (2009) argue that young people's lifestyles are changing and becoming more flexible, signifying that young people are not abandoning sport and physical activity, but becoming more recreational, suggesting a primary reason behind many club's declining membership numbers. England Netball have just received a £25 million sum from Sport England due to their continuous growth and popularity with women of all ages (Sport England, 2013). There has been a 34% increase in the number of people playing netball over the past four years with an inspiring 159,300 people taking part in netball at least once a week (England Netball, 2015). This funding will be used towards grassroots netball which will aim to encourage more teenage girls to play at a low cost with little commitment, offering a convenient and flexible way to pay and play based around the individual's lifestyle (Sport England, 2013).

As well as offering programmes which aim to help women return to netball, England Netball are setting up satellite clubs which aim to increase the quality of existing clubs and as a result, offer more competitive opportunities within netball (International Netball Federation, 2014). Not only does this help towards community regeneration, it ensures that more young people are able to stay involved in physical activity for longer through having an effective and stable link with neighbouring clubs (Hylton, 2013).

Although netball encourage mass participation and the promotion of new sign ups amongst adolescents, football clubs in England are specifically focussing on 16-19 year old females who are either already actively involved in the sport or have been at some stage in their youth (Sport England, 2015). The Football Association therefore pride themselves in offering a variety of football opportunities for young females such as student led teams with free equipment, recreational opportunities with little commitment such as soccercise, as well as competitive competitions and leagues (The FA, 2015). Burrows (2012) supports this and stresses the importance of a sports provider's ability to constantly make sure that they are offering new and innovative ways to make sport and physical activity enjoyable for young people, increasing the likelihood of retention.

2.4 Tennis and the LTA

In December 2012, Sport England invested a large amount of money into the LTA in order to contribute towards participation, education programmes, satellite club development and talented players (Sport England, 2015). The LTA has been criticised in the past for its narrow minded strategies surrounding talent and elite performers, lacking vision for club cultures as well as putting too much pressure on clubs to produce performance players (Lake, 2010). A recent Active People statistic showed that just over 1% of people aged 16 and over were actively participating in tennis at least once a week in England (Active People Survey, 2015). Following on from 2012, additional funding from Sport England has allowed the LTA to gain a better understanding of the tennis market and commit to growing participation within community, club, and educational areas, focussing on 16-25 year olds due to a proven decline in the number of people playing tennis regularly within this age group (Sport England, 2015).

The LTA will work in conjunction with County Sports Partnerships to aid the delivery of their Whole Sport Plan through using knowledge of the local area, promotional skills, plans, and priorities in the hope to successfully meet the needs of local communities (CSP Network, 2015). The LTA will therefore shift their focus to grassroots tennis,

encouraging a sport for all approach through offering initiatives such as play for free in local parks as well as increasing university opportunities (LTA, 2015). Correspondingly, Tennis Wales who is funded by the LTA and is the National Governing Body (NGB) for tennis in Wales are also working towards a main objective of growing the game with the help of key partners including Sport Wales and the Tennis Foundation, investing into the growth and development of tennis (LTA, 2015).

As a result of the LTA pushing a performance emphasis on clubs, existing literature claims that junior female tennis players are too focused on accomplishment and success, resulting in a loss of interest and a lack of motivation (Gallucci, 2008, Garyfallos, 2013, Lee, 2002). Kattan (2006) argues that young female players who have their competitive experience early are more likely to drop out, stressing the importance of balancing tennis with other activities throughout adolescence in order to act as a break away from the sport.

Hurtel and Lacassagne (2013) carried out research investigating a parent's perception of their involvement in their child's tennis. Questionnaires were given to 220 parents identifying on a scale from 1 (never) to 7 (always) topics such as their emotional, logistic, and informational involvement with their child in tennis (Hurtel and Lacassagne, 2013). Although results showed that all factors scored highly, speaking solely to parents could affect the trustworthiness of the results due to parents having a biased opinion on their involvement with their child (Kattan, 2006). Lee (2002) supports the results found and agrees that high drop off rates amongst adolescents are due to parents believing that the primary reason behind their child's participation in the sport is to achieve success. To promote a more rounded childhood, parents need to encourage their child to partake in a variety of physical activities as well as participating in shared interests together (Bloyce and Smith, 2009).

Holt and Wolfenden (2005) carried out research to identify players, parents and coaches perceptions of talent development in tennis through semi structured interviews. Results showed that parents fulfilled the role of providing emotional support

and guidance, however were sometimes perceived as being over-involved and as a result, added too much pressure for the child during competition (Lee, 2002, Holt and Wolfenden, 2005). Conversely, Rowe (2011) argues that coaching styles and methods are just as important when trying to prevent female drop out in tennis. For example, Bath University Tennis Club offer a wide range of coaching sessions for 16 to 18 year olds including Cardio Tennis and further opportunities to play during social evenings (Team Bath, 2015). However, the success of these coaching sessions/programmes will be dependent on its club coaches and their support, as well as their ability to understand the player in which they are working with (Rowe, 2011).

It is further argued that coaches therefore play a crucial role in retaining young females in sport, making it clear that coaches need to be enthusiastic and committed in order to enthuse young tennis players and prevent them from losing interest which could result in drop out (The United States Tennis Association, 2004). Furthermore, coaches need to adopt an open approach, refraining from being overly serious as this could lead to a lack of enjoyment and bad experience for young girls in tennis (The United States Tennis Association, 2004). In the view of Lee (2002), tennis coaches should structure their sessions to meet the physical, physiological and mental needs of their players and as a result, participation levels are more likely to increase. This literature demonstrates how coaches are an important asset to any club as they can promote enjoyment and retention amongst adolescents, in particular females (Lee, 2002, Rowe, 2011). This therefore suggests the importance of managers recruiting and hiring effective and influential coaches in the hope to grow participation and retain young females.

2.5 Conclusion

It is apparent that a vast amount of research has identified a clear trend in the declining rates of physical activity and participation in sport amongst adolescent females (Brown and Blanton, 2002, Evans, 2008, Hylton, 2013, Lee, 2002). The narrative has identified that most drop outs within adolescent tennis are due to an over emphasis on competition and success, causing a severe lack of enjoyment and bad experience for

players (Brewer, 2009). Although this proves specific to adolescent females in tennis, there is an evident lack of research surrounding managerial approaches and implications for clubs to use when specifically targeting participation and retention. Robson et al (2013) support this and claim that significant opportunities within NGB's are missed due to a lack of acknowledgement surrounding the strategic and managerial contributions to sport development.

While Brewer (2009) touches upon the importance of managerial approaches in regards to advertising and structuring sessions correctly in tennis, as well as Lee (2002) identifying coaches to be a key factor in preventing drop out, it lacks any further detail on how this can be specifically applied to targeting young female players and how clubs can therefore implement this. Although Hylton (2013) argues that new strategies have been put in place to target participation rates amongst adolescent females in tennis, there are undoubtedly gaps in the knowledge and a clear need for tennis clubs to re-visit and carefully analyse their management approaches to help build not only the club, but tennis as a whole. As a result, the aim of this study is to identify ways in which head coaches and managers within tennis clubs can provide and offer a positive and enjoyable experience for young females in light of the issue concerning drop out within this particular age group. The research question is as follows:

"What managerial approaches do tennis clubs use to prevent drop out amongst adolescent female tennis players?"

Specific study objectives:

- To explore managerial approaches used in clubs to prevent adolescent female drop out in tennis
- To identify current club structures in tennis
- To encourage managers/ head coaches to identify and evaluate their approach

This study will therefore explore managerial approaches within Great Britain relating specifically to adolescent female tennis players. It will aim to encourage managers/ head coaches within tennis clubs to acknowledge and address the current issue concerning adolescent female drop out in the hope to sustain a positive effect on youth and sport attrition (Bloyce and Smith, 2009). This study will therefore benefit clubs as it will look into their current programme, structure, and approach in the hope to make an effective impact through identifying flaws and achievable plans for future change. Subsequently, these improvements will help form quality clubs, resulting in more available opportunities for young females to fulfil their potential in tennis (Playing to Win, 2008). The more people participating in sport, the better their overall health and quality of life will be, greatly contributing to the government's policy for sport in England and Wales (Hardman and Stensel, 2009, Playing to Win, 2008, Climbing Higher, 2005).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline and justify the research philosophy, sampling technique, participants, research method, data collection, pilot study, ethics, and analysis tools used to form and support this study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The underlying research philosophy follows an interpretative approach due to the study being human based, therefore generating qualitative primary data (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Research can either take a positivist or interpretative approach; positivism is about gaining factual knowledge and measurements to form quantitative data, whereas interpretivism is interested in human thoughts, feelings and emotions, producing qualitative data (Burns, 2000). Although it has been argued that an interpretative approach can produce biased results and data that is difficult to generalize (Williams, 2000), sport is a social phenomenon and cannot be predicted, stressing the importance of collecting meaningful and deviant information specific to each individual within the study (Smith, 2010). Thus, this approach has therefore been chosen to gain an understanding of individual experiences, placing emphasis on the perspectives and realities of the participants being studied in order to gather subjective knowledge (Veal, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that people have different understandings of the world, explaining that there is not one truth and that these truths are contextual. As a result, this approach will help to uncover meanings, values, and trends, promoting a flexible approach to data collection (Flick, 2008).

3.3 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was chosen for this research as a specific selection of participants were needed for the study. Techniques such as random sampling would not have been beneficial as in this method, everyone has an equal probability of being

selected (Shank, 2002). Smith (2010) argues that purposive sampling intentionally focuses on particular individuals in order to promote and assist in the research. As a result, a specifically selected group of participants will save time and promote convenience for the researcher as well as allow accessibility to information (Gratton and Jones, 2010). More so, concentrating on certain individuals will add value to the study as the selected participants will provide information of a unique and detailed manor (Suen et al, 2014). However, participants in positions of power and authority will not always be relevant and useful to the study as their personal experiences and perceptions could be different to those expected, failing to contribute to the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). This sampling technique was therefore applied due to the need of gaining specific knowledge from experts within a certain field, in this case managers/ head coaches within tennis clubs (Tongco, 2007).

The skill and judgement of the researcher was able to increase the quality and trustworthiness of the information gathered as a result of engaging with the subject of study (Veal, 2014). Kuzmanić (2009) emphasises the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the research participants as enhancing report can increase trust and ease. Nevertheless, to ensure trustworthiness, the interviewer needs to be conscious of how they come across in the interview as it is possible to influence the interviewee's response through certain characteristics, body language and image (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). This refers to epistemology as the research approach creates a relationship between the researcher and the subject being studied which is apparent in this project (Veal, 2014).

3.4 Participants

The study focused on what managerial approaches tennis clubs use to prevent drop out amongst adolescent female tennis players. Respectively, these participants proved relevant due to their significant role and experience within tennis as well as their involvement in the running and structure of a tennis club. As a result, this will allow for the participants to reflect and provide in depth answers that prove relevant to

the research, promoting analysis in regards to seeing and understanding the effects of appropriate structures on the participation rates of adolescent girls (Hess, 2004).

Participant 1

Participant 1 is Head Coach at a tennis club in England. He has been involved in tennis for 58 years and reached a playing standard (rating) of 7.1. This participant has been working at his tennis club for 54 years and held previous roles prior to Head Coach such as Club Secretary and Treasurer.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is Head of Tennis at a tennis club in England. She has been involved in tennis for 40 years and has played at County standard at the age of 14. She has been working at her current club for 12 years and has fulfilled previous roles within the club such as coach and Tennis Development Officer.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is the Tennis Director at a tennis club in Wales. He has been involved in tennis for 27 years and played at a Regional level at the age of 11. He has been working at his current club for 12 years in which he set up his own company in 1999. Prior to this, he was a manager and coach.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is Head Coach at a tennis club in Wales. He first started working for the club in 2012 and has been the Head Coach for three years. Prior to this role, he was a University Tennis Co-ordinator for 2 years. He started playing tennis from the age of 11 and progressed through the Tennis Leader programme at around 15 years old, quickly becoming qualified to coach.

3.5 Research Method and Data Collection

Within qualitative research, various methods can be used to obtain data such as focus groups, interviews, questionnaires and observations (Veal, 2014). In this study, interviews were chosen to be the most beneficial method as it proved to be an effective way of retrieving relevant data from a small sample group (Jones, 2015). Interviews are a common method when collecting qualitative data as they allow the participants to go into more depth on a certain phenomenon, encouraging responses that have a lot more freedom as opposed to questionnaires (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Klien and Myers (1999) argue that interviews are renowned to be a popular primary data collection method in interpretivism studies, acknowledging human interest, feelings and emotions. Although interviews help gather information that is rich and meaningful, the participant must feel safe and at ease in order to open up and explore in depth experiences (Knox and Burkard, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were used to avoid a limited response from the interviewee, allowing for better results and an opportunity for the interviewer to explore any further factors without impelling on the interviewees reply (Yin, 2011).

Flick (2007) argues that quality is one of the major issues within qualitative research and says that if it is managed and controlled correctly, it will produce valid and reliable results. Klenke (2008) supports this and claims that reliability should be a benchmark of any qualitative research. Reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the methods and data carried out by the researcher whereas validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings (Brink et al, 2006). Although validity can prove difficult in qualitative research as each individual has their own view and outlook on the world, trust and confidence can be obtained within the results found if the method provides a true representation of the population studied (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). Throughout this study, reliability and validity were ensured through quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). The researcher made sure the interviews were consistent by using the same interview guide for each participant, as well as ensuring that the same analysis technique was applied to all data collected. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that there is no validity without reliability. Trust was built between the interviewer and interviewees through visiting the

organisation in which they worked to discuss the study and go over documents such as the interview guide and participant sheet (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). Although a relationship had already been established, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that prolonged engagement is key when promoting validity.

An interview guide was made (Appendix D) based around the research question and literature review which provided structure and organisation throughout, giving every participant the same questions in the same sequence. As a result, this ensured consistency and gave the interviewer an opportunity to adapt and probe any response the participant may have given (Edwards and Skinner, 2009). Kvale (2007) argues that having an interview guide is useful as it allows the interviewer to develop two lists of questions; one with questions based around the main subjects and another with probe questions based around the research in order to promote elaboration from the interviewee. Main questions and probe questions were used throughout the interview with an occasional follow up question to encourage in depth answers and added detail (Kvale, 2007). Probe questions proved beneficial within the interview as although semi structured interviews follow a specific set of questions (Jones, 2015), probe questions allowed for flexibility dependant on the individual being interviewed, encouraging unique answers. Yin (2011) adds that probe questions allow for elaboration on certain aspects or topics that the interviewer may deem important which could further benefit the study.

A benefit of semi structured interviews is that they allow for a prepared set of questions with structure and purpose (Kvale, 2007). This helps gain in-depth knowledge about individual experiences and perspectives, promoting learning and understanding by allowing the interviewee to express their views on their terms (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Although semi structured interviews can be prepared in advance, disadvantages include the relevance of responses given from the participant as additional questions asked may steer the focus from the main structure and purpose of the interview as well as waste time (Yin, 2011). This stresses the importance of creating an interview guide that is relevant and specific to the initial research question,

allowing the interviewer to only gather information that is beneficial for the study (Smith, 2010).

The interviews were conducted from 18th December 2015 to 13th January 2016 and were carried out in an environment of the participant's choice. In order to re-live the interviews with the chosen participants, a Dictaphone was used to record data. Sayer (2011) argues that it is strongly preferable to have a full record of each interview as it allows for a word to word transcription, giving the interviewer a closer analysis of the information being gathered. This form of data collection promoted the reliability and validity of the information gathered and allowed the interviewer to write notes throughout, commenting on body language and potential pauses in speech (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011, Yin, 2011).

3.6 Pilot Study

Prior to collecting data, a pilot study was carried out (Appendix C). Day and Meriwether (2001) argue that conducting a pilot study can test the procedure to search for any research issues that could affect the smooth running of the data collection. The Dictaphone was tested during the pilot study to ensure it worked correctly and therefore recorded the participant clearly. Yin (2011) argues that pilot studies are crucial when promoting success in the main study as well as ensuring validity. Furthermore, the interview questions were tested on a practice participant in order to ensure that the guide was well structured and clearly understood. The researcher also practiced their interview technique due to a lack of research experience which promoted confidence and aided the smooth running of the actual interview (Maxwell, 2012).

Following on from the pilot study, minor changes were made in regards to the grouping and structure of the questions. Any questions that seemed to be overly elongated were simplified in order to make the interview guide easier for the interviewee to understand and interpret. The questions were also grouped into themes, taken from the literature

review, making them flow in more of a sequential order. Consequently, forming and designing relevant questions will obtain information specific to the main purpose of the study, improving the reliability and validity (Gorden, 1998).

3.7 Ethics

Due to the nature of sport, research within this field is difficult to carry out without coming across ethical issues and considerations (Smith, 2010). Throughout the research project, it is mandatory that the participants involved remain anonymous and the data collected is confidential with access strictly limited to the researcher (Jones, 2015). Confidentiality concerns agreements about how data is handled as well as maintaining privacy and respect for the participants involved (Ethicist, 2015). The participant's names and work locations will remain anonymous throughout and will be referred to as 'Participant 1', 'Participant 2', etc. Before every interview, it was made compulsory that each participant taking part signed a consent form and read a participant information sheet, emphasising the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher reviewed the codes of conduct within the Data Protection Act (1998) document which was created to legally manage and control the way information is handled and stored. Within this study, only the researcher and supervisor will access the information with given permission from the participant. It was also justified that there was little to no risk for the participant to take part in this study, all of which was completely voluntary.

Contextual ethical principles that need to be managed within this study relate to interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee. Through conducting a pilot study, the questions were deemed fit for purpose and therefore encouraged a good response from the participant being interviewed, ensuring all questions were kept relevant and far from intrusive (Flick, 2007). The interviewer carried out the process in an approachable manor, ensuring that the interviewee was not interrupted or spoken over, maximising the detail and focus throughout their responses (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, a post data collection method was applied in which

every participant received a transcript of their interview and a completed copy of the dissertation study. The participant was therefore able to read over and review the transcript, giving them an opportunity to communicate and discuss content with the researcher regarding any alterations or disagreements they may have found (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). This proved beneficial to the researcher as the participant's contribution improved not only the quality of the transcripts, but the overall validity of the research (Page et al, 2000). Additionally, the researcher was able to preserve research ethics and empower participants involved by giving them control over what got included in the dissertation study (Davidson, 2009).

3.8 Analysis

As identified, the data was collected via a Dictaphone whereby all information was recorded to ease the transcription and analysis process. All four interviews were manually transcribed and saved onto a word document in order to allow for close interpretation and analysis of the information gathered (Yin, 2011). Boeije (2009) argues data is necessary when carrying out empirical research as it aids the justification of findings presented later on in the study, for example relationship trends and interpretations. The raw data was prepared ready for analysis, in which thematic coding was used to categorise and fully understand the information being collected (Boeije, 2009). Coding relates to a word or short phrase that is described as the critical link between data collection and the true explanation surrounding it's meaning (Saldana, 2012).

Other analysis techniques such as content analysis were not chosen as this technique is revolved mainly around a systematic procedure whereby the content of text within for example a newspaper is described and analysed, therefore proving inappropriate for this study (Bernard, 2013). More so, thematically coding the information will allow the researcher to categorise key quotes and phrases that are examples of the same phenomenon, ideas, or explanations (Gibbs, 2007). Gibbs (2007) continues to explain that coding allows for effective organisation of data and enables the researcher to examine such data in a structured and efficient way. Line-by-line coding is an effective

type of coding that involves going through the transcript and coding each line of writing, proving beneficial as it forces analytic thinking and makes the interviewer pay close attention to what the participant is actually saying (Gibbs, 2007).

It is essential that the data collected is displayed and presented in a way that allows conclusions to be drawn (Graton and Jones, 2010, Flick, 2007, Gibbs, 2007). The data collected in this study will therefore be displayed in a table format, allowing for visual and clear thematic analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, key themes were identified through the use of the literature review, displayed in the data analysis table (see verification file). These themes include; adolescent female drop out in sport, adolescent female drop out in tennis, coaches in tennis, the LTA on retaining adolescent females, views on girls only tennis initiative "Miss-hits", club's approach to retain adolescent females and improvements the club could make to improve scope for adolescent females. These themes will be introduced and illuminated with an adequate quotation/ phrase selected from the data analysis table.

4.2 Adolescent female drop out in sport

This theme is concerned with the reasoning behind adolescent female drop out in sport. It was chosen due to its significant importance to the overall study in attempt to give an insight as to why so many young females do not participate in physical activity. Not only does this have an effect on tennis which is the sport of interest within this study, it has a knock on effect across all sporting activities. The following phrases suggest that adolescent females drop out of sport due to a variety of reasons such as peer pressure, lack of self-competence and an urge to gain independence which are outlined in the following four quotations.

"Peer pressure; body image; boyfriends!"

"They would rather play team sports where there's less focus on their abilities"

"Boys can be a bit more competitive than girls and they have that sort of instinct where they like the nature of playing competition… girls don't enjoy coming up against each other… girls like to do things together"

"Kids want to gain independence, whether they're boys or girls, so they will start to do Saturday jobs"

4.3 Adolescent female drop out in tennis

This theme specifically targets the issue regarding adolescent female drop out in tennis. It has been chosen to gather and appreciate different views and opinions from participants that hold a great amount of knowledge and experience within tennis. There was agreement between participants regarding the reasoning behind adolescent female drop out in tennis. The following phrases suggest that adolescent female tennis players are failing to participate in tennis due to an over emphasis on competition and winning instead of other health and social benefits.

"Too much emphasis on competition rather than the other benefits of tennis where it's a really good social sport"

"If they're playing singles the onus is on them to perform and I think that is what they're not happy to do…there are elements of shyness, lack of self-belief, self-awareness"

"I don't think tennis offers them enough to stay… unless you are committed to the sport and you are a sporty person in your own right and you've chosen tennis as your sport, you won't stay in it".

"I've got half a dozen kids now who are about to do GCSEs and they will stop because of exam pressure"

4.4 Coaches in tennis

This theme has been chosen due to the positive or negative affect coaches can impose on their players in tennis. It links to the previous theme as it can be a main driver of player enjoyment/ boredom, having a large effect on the ability for a club to

successfully retain adolescent female tennis players. Three participants were in unanimity when questioned about coaches in tennis. The responses below emphasise that adolescent females would benefit from a female tennis coach due to their ability to relate and connect with a role model. This theme allows managers to assess and view their current coaching team in the hope of providing the right coach that is best suited for adolescent female players.

"It's important for girls of that age to have a female role model within coaching. Quite often males are not very empathising for how girls are at that age feel and there not always sensitive"

"It's to do with role models, aspire to be them…I've always encouraged people to have female coaches"

"The easiest thing to do is be untruthful with your comments; in other words flatter them into thinking they're doing better".

4.5 The LTA on retaining adolescent females

The national governing body for tennis in Great Britain (LTA) has a large influence over funding and initiatives ran within tennis clubs across the country. This theme has been chosen due to the masses of attention drawn to the LTA in regards to their ability to retain adolescent female players in the sport. A variety of opinions were collected and as seen below, the participants had different experiences/ thoughts about the LTA's ability to retain young girls in tennis.

"The LTA think that competition is a good retention tool, I probably don't agree with that"

"I do think the LTA need to look more into and research what age girls tend to drop out in sport and find some reasons to try and put together an initiative that will keep those girls in sport"

"They are trying their best, people diss the LTA…at grass roots I can't fault them…we all moan because our expectations of them are quite high now and I think on this participation bit, they're trying their best, they really are"

4.6 Views on girls only tennis initiative "Miss-hits"

This theme outlines the tennis initiative "Miss-hits" which was set up by Judy Murray in attempt to attract more young girls around the age of 6 into tennis. This theme has been chosen due to the importance of initiatives in tennis and to therefore discuss if welcoming a girl's only initiative could be a way for managers and clubs to successfully retain adolescent females for longer. There was consensus between all four participants questioned regarding their opinions on the Miss-hits initiative. The following four quotations discuss the initiative's lack of direction and awareness.

"I'm not familiar with it…I've had no introduction to this in the coaching courses we go on, coach education. I've just not heard of it really"

"It's got nowhere to go, so once you've done Miss-Hits as a U8 (under 8) girls thing, where do you feed into? You have to feed into the current programme; which is boys"

"Are you going to address more 16-year old girls staying in tennis by addressing and bringing more 6 year olds in? No. Are you going to change the fact that girls develop earlier and are more interested in relationships, probably have more outside influences that maybe pull them away from sport? Probably not. I personally have never really done stuff or seen a great deal of success from stuff that's girls only"

"With the Miss-Hits they have all these characters and it's really quite appealing but I don't personally see the benefit of spending all this money on creating initiatives for

girls of that age because I don't see an issue of getting girls of that age into the sport in the first place"

4.7 Club's approach to retain adolescent females

This theme underpins the research question and explores what approaches tennis clubs have in place to retain adolescent females and tackle drop out. It has been chosen to identify and compare different club approaches in regards to methods that help retain female players for longer. Each participant voiced a different approach to retain adolescent females within their tennis club. The following quotes discuss volunteering and more ways for females to play / get involved within the sport.

"Pay and play basis…no obligation to be there…We have lots of competitions, lots of tournaments… individual coaching for teenagers is on Thursdays"

"They can volunteer, they can engage…We have girls only coaching…Over 16s could go onto the adult coaching programme"

"A few of the girls are involved with stuff at the club such as helping out with coaching sessions, we have a couple of girls that have done their tennis leaders course"

"Just do a good job. That's it!" "Whether you're 16 years old or whether you're 4 years old, the only way to actually gain enjoyment from tennis is to have some ability"

4.8 Improvements the club could make to improve scope for adolescent females

Throughout the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on not only their current approach within the club but to also acknowledge and identify ways to improve their structure/ approach in the aid of retaining adolescent females. This theme therefore deemed important as it can help improve the overall running of the club as well as help encourage new ideas. The participants demonstrated that they were willing to facilitate

change and think of new ideas in order to retain more adolescent females. The quotes below discuss new approaches such as having designated court time for females as well as being flexible in regards to new ideas.

"Make sure that they have a female role model that is still relatively young and they can almost see themselves as that person in a few years' time…More of a mix and see tennis as a chance to socialise and meet people"

"I think we could give them designated court time, so that they could play with one another rather than mixing it…make it cheaper. Reduced subscriptions, that might get more girls in… advertise in all the secondary schools locally"

"If somebody comes with an idea and they think it can evolve and develop and it's sustainable… then I'll do it. I'll try anything…"

"I actually want to get it to the point where I've got a lesson plan structure for 2 and a half to 3 years…So as a coach I can just give you an iPad"

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Further analysis will take place in light of the key themes highlighted in the results chapter. Each theme will be discussed in light of participant responses and then compared to various sources of academic literature.

5.2 Adolescent female drop out in sport

Participant responses outlined a common theme regarding the reasoning behind adolescent drop out. Two participants identified that adolescents would rather play team sports where the onus isn't solely on them to perform as well as having a greater preference to do things together with other females of the same age. However, responses from the remaining two participants argued that a female's priorities change during adolescence and as a result, physical activity gets pushed aside and is seen as something of a minor importance.

5.2.1 Competition and social factors

When discussing reasons behind adolescent female drop out in sport, one participant responded: "They would rather play team sports where there's less focus on their abilities. Another participant stated: "Boys can be a bit more competitive than girls and they have that sort of instinct where they like the nature of playing competition… girls don't enjoy coming up against each other… girls like to do things together". Research carried out by Slater and Tiggemann (2010) state that girls stop playing sport because they lose interest due to a lack of competence in their abilities. Jago et al (2011) explain that sessions which maximise enjoyment and promote socialisation are more likely to increase the chance of adolescent female retention. It is argued that positive team sport experiences in early adolescence is closely associated with positive self-esteem in middle adolescence (Pedersen and Seidman, 2004). Thus, research has outlined that girls like to take part in sport with friends in a social environment, making them more likely to continue being regularly active as opposed to taking part in an

individual sport which can negatively focus on their individual capabilities and skill level (Evans, 2006, Brooks and Magnusson, 2006).

5.2.2 Priorities during adolescence

Further responses from participants led to discussion around young adolescents wanting to gain independence such as getting a Saturday job to earn money. Linking to independence, another participant gave reason behind drop out to be because of: "Peer pressure; body image; boyfriends!" Whitehead and Biddle (2008) support this and argue that a female's priorities change throughout adolescence, whether that is getting a part time job or being in a relationship, both can result in physical activity being seen as less of a priority. Research shows that a youth's motive for dropping out of sport can be down to many reasons, one being interest and conflicts with other activities (Gould and Horn, 1984). As females reach adolescence, they have the ability to manage their own leisure time, producing greater amounts of options and demands (Sapp and Haubenstricker, 1978). More so, free time can be devoted to other activities which are less likely to involve physical activity, allowing adolescent females to be considered 'part of the in-crowd' through conforming to the latest trends and fashions which are argued to be significantly important to the majority of youths (Warrington and Younger, 2011).

5.2.3 School sport and retention

In order for different sports to facilitate adolescent females, it is crucial that they understand and consider the reason behind their initial lack of participation (Nicholson et al, 2011). Best practice argues that physical education and sport during a child's adolescent years should provide a positive and safe environment to prevent young people from having a negative experience and therefore dropping out and becoming inactive (Beltrán-Carrillo et al, 2012). Whilst priorities may change during adolescence, research argues that sport activities that generate fun increase the likelihood of adolescents maintaining their participation (Skille and Østerås, 2011). School sport and other sporting organisations need to remain flexible and offer a range of opportunities for females to partake in physical activity that is of interest within a safe, fun and social environment (Nicholson et al, 2011).

5.3 Adolescent female drop out in tennis

There was agreement between participants regarding the reasoning behind adolescent female drop out in tennis. Two participants argued that there is too much emphasis on competition and success for adolescent female players, resulting in a lack of enjoyment and retention. However, another participant identified academic pressure as a reason behind drop out in tennis. Further discussion led to a participant disagreeing and stating that tennis does not offer enough for adolescent females to stay, suggesting that other sports may take preference/ priority.

5.3.1 Competition and exam pressure

When discussing reasons behind adolescent female drop out in tennis, one participant stated: "If they're playing singles the onus is on them to perform and I think that is what they're not happy to do". Another participant replied: "Too much emphasis on competition rather than the other benefits of tennis where it's a really good social sport". Research carried out by Kattan (2006) argues that females who have their competitive tennis experience too early are more likely to drop out. A continual focus on performance and success can put pressure on adolescent females and cause a lack of motivation and interest for the sport (Gallucci, 2008, Garyfallos, 2013). A participant further explained that competition can negatively promote shyness due to a lack of self-belief and self-awareness. Garyfallos (2013) supports this and argues that adolescent female players are more likely to drop out due to perceptions of low competence, resulting in a lack of self-belief and confidence.

It is important that adolescents balance tennis with other activities as an over emphasis on competition and seriousness can take away the enjoyment from playing (Lee, 2002). Therefore, tennis clubs and coaches need to ensure that they are marketing competition in a way that is approachable and stimulating for young female players. In addition, a participant outlined that tennis does not offer adolescent females enough to stay. Existing literature states that the LTA have been accused for their narrow minded strategies which aim to promote and produce elite performers within clubs (Lake, 2010). Research has made it clear that having a competition centred

approach within sport is more likely to promote drop out amongst adolescents due to the amount of pressure needed to be successful (Gallucci, 2008). The LTA have recently received a large amount of funding to promote participation and club development which has every hope to produce more opportunities within tennis and prevent adolescents from dropping out (Sport England, 2013).

On the other hand, it was important to note that another participant disagreed and argued that adolescent females drop out of tennis due to GCSE's and exam pressures. If in this situation, the only reason adolescents are dropping out is when their exams take over and study time is needed, it suggests that this club's approach for retaining adolescent females is somewhat successful as GCSE's at this age cannot be avoided. Anyhow, this relates to research by Whitehead and Biddle (2008) whereby a female's priorities change throughout adolescence, resulting in physical activity being seen as less of a priority.

Participation amongst adolescent females in tennis is an ongoing debate that needs further investigation. Tennis clubs need to select an approach that actively gets young females involved through letting them voice their opinions and thoughts. Although Nicholson et al (2011) argue that sports needs to offer activities that are of interest and enjoyment, funding towards participation will be wasted if those female players are not communicating what they want to see within tennis.

5.4 Coaching roles in tennis

Much agreement was discovered when talking to participants about coaches in tennis. Three out of four participants agreed that having a female coach and role model is an effective way to retain more adolescent females in tennis. However, one participant believed that praising adolescents when coaching was a way to retain them and keep them coming back even if they weren't performing the skill correctly.

5.4.1 Gender

When discussing coaches in tennis, one participant stated: "It's to do with role models, aspire to be them…I've always encouraged people to have female coaches". It is argued that the presence of a positive role model during a female's adolescence can increase and promote physical activity (Young et al, 2015, Meier and Saavedra, 2009). Another participant said: "The more females there are involved in coaching tennis, the better". A response from the third participant agreed with the advantages of having female coaches and discussed how females can show more empathy towards girls whereas males are not always as sensitive. Although existing research outlines that only a small percentage of girls perceive a sports coach to be their role model, (other role models include mother, peer or celebrity) (Vescio et al, 2005), literature outlines that female coaches can understand the psychological and social pressures that young females may experience (Women in Sport, 2015). Women in Sport (2015) outline that there are low numbers of women coaching in sport, suggesting that there are fewer role models for adolescents and female coaches. The LTA need to encourage more female coaches into tennis by increasing the opportunities and pathways for women in order to increase the amount of adolescent female tennis players (BBC Sport, 2016).

5.4.2 Coaching philosophy

The final participant demonstrated a different coaching philosophy when it came to retaining adolescent females. This participant argued that the only the only way to keep adolescent females in tennis was to flatter them to think they were doing better than they actually were, in other words, taking the focus away from their technical ability. Guillet et al (2006) argue that the intention to discontinue sport participation is not to do with the gender of the role model, but to do with an individual's perceived competence and value of the activity. This participant is going away from traditional coaching methods and trying to increase the amount of players attending sessions. Existing research has a tendency to focus on coaches that produce successful players, however, it is how the players perceive their coach and his or her instruction that determines increased enjoyment and retention (Gearity, 2012). Arguably, if a tennis coach is not providing useful instruction, they may be considered poor at

teaching (Gearity, 2012). Although people will have different coaching philosophies, styles, and methods, it is important that every coach within tennis is supportive, enthusiastic, and committed in order to enthuse young people and increase participation (Rowe, 2011).

5.5 The LTA on retaining adolescent females

A common theme was identified as three out of four participants claimed that the LTA are not doing enough to retain adolescent females in tennis. Controversially, it was important to note that one participant said that the LTA are trying their best in regards to increasing participation, putting more of a positive outlook on the governing body.

5.5.1 The LTA's 2015-2018 strategy

When discussing the LTA's ability to retain adolescent females, one participant responded: "The LTA think that competition is a good retention tool, I probably don't agree with that". Other participants stated: "I do think the LTA need to look more into and research what age girls tend to drop out in sport and find some reasons to try put together an initiative that will keep those girls in sport". It is clear that these responses question the LTA's ability to come up with an effective strategy and/or initiative which is aimed at retaining adolescent females. The LTA need to push their new strategy and follow through with their mission which aims to get more people playing tennis more often through providing support to clubs within the community (LTA, 2015). This supports the opinion of a participant whose response claims: "I think on this participation bit, they're trying their best, they really are". As the LTA's strategic plan is proposed for 2015-2018 (LTA, 2015), this is something that will need ongoing work, patience and communication from clubs and coaches.

The LTA (2015) claim in their strategy that they will introduce fun, recreational competition for 6-18 year olds in a less pressurised environment. It is argued that this overall strategy will only be successful if the right coaches are employed, therefore portraying an ability to enthuse young players, especially females (The United States

Tennis Association, 2004). Additionally, the LTA could also focus on adult pathways in tennis to increase participation in the hope to target the parents of adolescent females. Coakley and White (1992) argue that adolescents are largely influenced by their parents, suggesting that they are more likely to play tennis if their parents do, increasing the likelihood of retention.

5.6 Views on girls only tennis initiative "Miss-hits"

Consensus was demonstrated between all participants as responses agreed that the LTA driven "Miss-hits" initiative has a lack of direction and ability to retain more adolescent females into the sport.

5.6.1 Have the LTA "Missed-the-hit"?

When discussing the "Miss-hits" initiative, one participant strongly responded: "It's got nowhere to go, so once you've done Miss-Hits as a U8 (under 8) girls' thing, where do you feed into? You have to feed into the current programme; which is boys". Another confidently responded: "Are you going to address more 16-year old girls staying in tennis by addressing and bringing more 6 year olds in? No.". The LTA mentions within their strategy that they will retain teenage players by changing the way tennis is delivered in secondary schools (LTA, 2015). This contradicts their 'girls only' initiative as not only do participants strongly disagree with its motive as one explained: "I don't personally see the benefit of spending all this money on creating initiatives for girls of that age because I don't see an issue of getting girls of that age into the sport in the first place", the initiative is aimed at girls around 6 years old, which in most clubs, isn't where the low numbers and drop offs are instigating.

It is clear that this is an issue that needs to be further investigated. Clubs need to feed back to the LTA on what type of initiatives would benefit their club and also gather the opinions of adolescent female players to come to a conclusion as to what they would like to see implemented. Furthermore, the LTA (2015) have acknowledged that different approaches will be required in order to increase participation levels across

different age groups. Clubs need to actively engage with the LTA and provide feedback to help better the sport as a whole.

5.7 Club's approach to retain adolescent females

The participant's responses outlined a common theme in regards to their current approach to retain adolescent females. Three out of four participants recognised that an effective way of retaining adolescent's is to offer them a wide array of opportunities to take part and get involved within the club. This involves helping out in coaching sessions, volunteering, as well as providing individual coaching and no obligation sessions. Additionally, a response from one participant clearly believed that the only way to retain adolescents in tennis is to simply do a good job in order to maximise enjoyment.

5.7.1 Volunteering and educational opportunities

When discussing club approaches, one participant responded: "They can volunteer, they can engage…We have girls only coaching…Over 16s could go onto the adult coaching programme". Another added: "A few of the girls are involved with stuff at the club such as helping out with coaching sessions, we have a couple of girls that have done their tennis leaders course". Miller (1998) argues that sport industries should promote educational opportunities for girls within sport in order to enhance their future career options and promote lifelong involvement. Further research identifies that there is a promising increase in the number of girls participating in sport and argues that it is crucial to provide adolescents with ample opportunities to participate in order to maintain their interest and enjoyment (Cooky, 2009). Another participant said: "Pay and play basis…no obligation to be there". As previously identified, a female's priorities change throughout adolescence (Whitehead and Biddle, 2008). Whilst studies show that a large amount of adolescents drop out of organised sport, adopting a flexible, non-committed approach can be an effective way to meet the needs of adolescent females and therefore increase participation and retention (Okely et al, 2011).

5.7.2 Coaching

One participant argued that the only way to retain people in tennis is to enhance their ability through effective coaching in the hope to promote enjoyment. Another participant further added that they would retain more adolescent females by having a female coach who would act as a positive support for adolescent females (Women in Sport, 2015). Research identifies that having a team of enthusiastic, supportive coaches will help promote participation and retention amongst adolescent females (Rowe, 2011, The United States Tennis Association, 2004). Therefore, this can promote the success of a club's coaching programme, promoting enjoyment through adopting an open, structured approach (Lee, 2002).

It is clear that the participants have implemented approaches within their clubs in regards to retaining adolescent females. It is crucial that clubs continue to encourage female players to get involved through not only playing, but coaching and volunteering, developing employability and increasing the chances of retaining this age group and gender (LTA, 2015). In order to assess the effectiveness club approaches, managers and head coaches could meet monthly to discuss targets and participation numbers.

5.8 Improvements the club could make to improve scope for adolescent females

During this discussion, head coaches and managers understandably had different ideas as to how they could improve the scope for adolescent females within their club. Ideas ranged from reducing the cost to play, welcoming new ideas from club members/employees, to using technology and ensuring more female role models are present.

5.8.1 Tennis marketing

Discussion surrounding improvements for club's to increase the scope for adolescent females stemmed ideas such as: "Make it cheaper….Reduced subscriptions, advertise in all the secondary schools locally". Tennis has been criticised for being an

elitist, expensive sport, therefore, this is a promising approach to get more females interested in playing (Hyman, 2012). Okley et al (2001) add that targeting the curricular, school environment is an effective way to promote physical activity. Another participant responded: "See tennis as a chance to socialise and meet people". This could change the way tennis is advertised and delivered, for example club evenings and fun cardio tennis sessions could be promoted in the hope to conceal more adolescent players and improve the attractiveness of the sport (Hill and Green, 2012).

5.8.2 Sustainable ideas

An additional response from a participant discussed the benefits of being open to new ideas in the hope to evolve and develop the club. Chalip (1997) argues that managers within the sports industry are constantly under pressure to re-examine their methods and approaches, being flexible and open to new ideas can improve the club as a whole and increase participation. Similarly, one participant said: "I actually want to get it to the point where I've got a lesson plan structure for 2 and a half to 3 years…So as a coach I can just give you an iPad". This emphasises the need to be adaptive and forward thinking, implementing a strategy that will further develop the organisation (Hoye, 2012). Additional ideas from a participant included: "Make sure that they have a female role model that is still relatively young and they can almost see themselves as that person in a few years' time". Previous mention of the importance of having female coaches and role models in sport outlines that this is a positive and worthwhile improvement to make within a club (Women in Sport, 2015, Young et al, 2015).

Each participant documented a range of ideas when asked how they could improve the scope for adolescent female players in their club. Whilst the majority had many different ideas, it is important that tennis clubs learn from other managerial approaches, implying that ideas should be shared openly in the hope to improve the scope for adolescents and grow the sport as a whole. This is something that will require further investigation and therefore additional research into how clubs can unite and work together to improve the debate that surrounds adolescent female drop off in tennis.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.0 Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to identify ways in which managers and head coaches within tennis clubs could prevent adolescent female drop out. Statistics taken from the Active People Survey (2015) identified that only 22.3% of adolescent females were participating in regular physical activity at least three times a week, 17.2% less than adolescent males. Furthermore, in England, only 1% of females aged 16 and over were recorded actively playing tennis once a week in 2015 (Active People Survey, 2015). A vast amount of research has been carried around in regards to reasons behind adolescent female drop out in tennis (Gallucci, 2008, Garyfallos, 2013, Kattan, 2006, Lee, 2002, Rowe, 2011).

This study found that adolescent females drop out of tennis due to an over emphasis on competition and success, resulting in a lack of enjoyment and motivation to participate. Other reasons suggested that academic pressure and other priorities during adolescence contributed to low numbers of participation and therefore a lack of retention. Participants identified that having a female coach and role model was an effective way to retain female players, as well as providing plenty of opportunities for females to get involved within the club on a regular basis, for example coaching and volunteering.

However, the study identified that club managers and head coaches did not believe that the LTA were doing enough to retain adolescent female tennis players and identified improvements to their own structures and approaches. Improvements included; reducing the cost to play, welcoming new ideas from club members/ players, using technology and ensuring more female role models were present.

The main aims and objectives were achieved as managerial approaches were explored and therefore discussed as this study allowed managers and head coaches to identify not only their current approach to adolescent female drop out in tennis, but

were challenged to think of ways in which this could be improved. Forward thinking therefore promoted evaluation in the hope to reduce the amount of future drop out.

6.1 Limitations of Research

In order to overcome limitations within the study, the researcher had a close relationship with each of the participants which allowed them to feel comfortable and at ease throughout the interview process. According to Knox and Burkard (2009), a participant who feels at ease during an interview is more likely to produce in depth, meaningful information in regards to personal experiences and emotions, promoting the trustworthiness of data collected. In addition to having prior knowledge and a good relationship with each participant, transcripts from the interviews were sent to each individual so they could check over and make sure they were happy with what had been recorded, enhancing face validity (Veal, 2014). Limitations included a small sample size and therefore lack of geographical disperse, meaning there was no comparison to approaches and opinions in other countries. Furthermore, the study could have interviewed adolescent females that were either ex-tennis players or currently involved in the sport in attempt to get further ideas and opinions.

6.2 Further research

In order to carry out further research, a deeper understanding is needed concerning managerial approaches and how these can better retain adolescent female players. Managers and coaches could compare their club to other tennis venues who have achieved tennismark which is awarded for good standards and best practice (LTA, 2015). This way, managers can replicate best practice and approaches that not only prove successful at retaining adolescent female players, but are also sustainable. Further research should continue to address whether improvements and current approaches have been successful within clubs, setting goals and targets for participation as well as assessing the progress of the approach / initiative.

6.3 Implications of the study

Managers and head coaches within tennis clubs will benefit from the findings discovered as it will help shape their club in terms of the sustainability and effectiveness of approaches and structures. It will encourage forward thinking and therefore extended planning in terms of improvements and adjustments that can be put in place to tackle the issue revolving poor retention rates amongst adolescent female players in tennis.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UREC reference number: XXXXXX

Title of Project: What managerial approaches do tennis clubs use to prevent drop outs amongst adolescent female tennis players?

Background
This is a study in which the volunteer is being requested to participate and such participation is entirely voluntary. This study will attempt to discuss and identify ways in which managers or coaches within tennis clubs can retain young female tennis players and therefore prevent drop outs between the ages of 16 and 18 years old.

In brief, this research will aim to:

(i)   Help managers and coaches identify ways in which their club can accommodate young female tennis players and therefore increase participation within this target group.

(ii)   Help the tennis club evaluate and re-visit its current structure to further promote participation amongst young female players.

The findings will be presented in a dissertation project for Cardiff Metropolitan University and may also be published.

Your participation in the research project

Why you have been asked
You have been invited to take part in this study because it is thought that you will benefit as a result. The expected benefits include obtaining an increased awareness of young female tennis players as well as what approaches are most effective to keep them in tennis for longer. This will be achieved through identifying and discussing current approaches in place as well as potential approaches that could be implemented.

What would happen if you agree to participate in this study?
If you agree to join the study, there are three main things that will happen.
1. You will be interviewed and asked to answer questions about your tennis club and its structure in relation to providing for young female players.
2. At the end, I will use the information collected from the interview in my dissertation project in which you will remain anonymous.
3. Your involvement will end as soon as the interview is over, which is thought to last about 30-40 minutes.

Are there any risks?
I do not think there are any significant risks to you if you were to take part in this study. If at any point you do not wish to answer a question, you don't have to.

Your rights
Taking part in this study does not mean that you give up any legal rights. In the very unlikely event of something going wrong during the evaluation, Cardiff Metropolitan University fully indemnifies its staff, and participants are covered by its insurance.

What happens to the results of the evaluation?
The recorded interview will be transcribed and used only for reasons to do with my study. There will be no way of identifying what you have said as your name will be removed, remaining anonymous throughout my study.

Are there any benefits from taking part?
There is no cost to you to take part in this study. You will have a chance to reflect and evaluate on the current approaches you have in place to prevent young female tennis players dropping out of the sport. It will therefore promote a discussion on how you will continue to provide opportunities to this specific target group or/and what you could do better to facilitate this in your club.

What happens next?
With this letter you'll find a consent form for you to complete. This form will confirm your involvement in this study as well as an understanding of what you have been asked to do if you take part.

How we protect your privacy:
As outlined, throughout this study I will respect your privacy. I have taken steps to ensure that you cannot be identified from any of the information that you give me during the interview. At the end of the evaluation study all information gathered will be destroyed, except the consent form in which I am required to do so by Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Further information
If you have any questions about the research or how I intend to conduct the study, please contact me.

Miss Alexandra Hull
☏   07814707427
✉   A.Hull@outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk

APPENDIX B

UWIC CONSENT FORM

UREC Reference No:

Title of Project: What managerial approaches do tennis clubs use to
                      prevent drop outs amongst adolescent female tennis players?

Name of Researcher: Miss Alexandra Hull

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1) I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet
   dated ………. for this study. I have had the opportunity to
   consider the information, ask questions and have had these
   answered satisfactorily.

2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and
   that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a
   reason.

3) I also understand that if this happens, my relationship with Cardiff
   Metropolitan University or my legal rights, will not be affected
   .

4) I understand that information from the study will be used for my
   dissertation and may be published, but that I will not be identified.

5) I agree to take part in this study.

_____
Name of Participant

_____
Signature of Participant

_____
Date

APPENDIX C

Pilot interview Guide

1. How long have you been involved in tennis and what standard have you played at?
    P: Who first got you into tennis

2. How long have you been working at your current club?
    P: Current / previous roles

3. It has been proven that young girls participate in less sport than boys, do you agree with this statement?
    P: Why do teenage girls drop out of sport in general?

4. Why do you think teenage girls drop out of tennis in particular?
    P: Competition focused? / Coaches

5. What coaching and playing opportunities do you currently provide for teenagers at your club?

6. Do you think the LTA are doing enough to retain teenage girls and increase participation?
    P: Views on Miss-Hits programme

7. When you were playing tennis, did you have many opportunities to play?

8. Do you do any collaborative work with the LTA / Sport county councils?

9. How do you plan to solve the problem and retain teenage girls in tennis?
    P: Structure / approach

10. In regards to your club structure, are there any areas you think could be improved in regards to retaining more teenage girls?

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

1. How long have you been involved in tennis?

   P: What standard have you played at

   P: Who got you into tennis

2. How long have you been working at your club?

   P: Current / previous roles

   Participation and drop outs

3. It has been proven that young girls participate in less sport than boys, do you agree with this?

   P: Why do young females drop out of sport?

4. Why do you think young females drop out of tennis in particular?

   P: Competition focused? / Coaches

   LTA

5. Do you think the LTA are doing enough to retain young girls and increase participation?

   P: Views on Miss-Hits programme

6. When you were playing tennis, what was it like?

7. Do you do any collaborative work with the LTA / Sport county councils?

   Club specific

8. What coaching and playing opportunities do you currently provide for adolescents at your club?

9. How do you plan to specifically retain young females in tennis?

   P: Structure / approach

10. In regards to your club structure, are there any areas you think could be improved in regards to retaining more young female players?