

Session: **Personality and competencies of sport managers**

Abstract nr: **EASM-0004**

Competencies and cognitive styles of board members in community sports clubs

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Background and objectives

Volunteer boards of nonprofit organizations such as sports clubs are critical assets in the overall performance of their organizations. The effectiveness of these boards, however, has long been considered problematic (Herman & Renz, 2004). There are few studies focusing on competencies and cognitive styles of members of sports clubs. Selecting board members with the right competencies and cognitive style might enhance the effectiveness of these boards. This study focuses on competencies and cognitive styles of board members of sports clubs. Cognitive styles are individual preferences in perceiving and processing information (Rayner & Riding, 1997). Researchers have found that individual differences in cognitive styles influence problem solving, decision making, communication, and creativity in important ways (Kirton, 2003).

Methods

The sample consisted of 106 board members and 103 sports members of Flemish community sports clubs. The board and sports members of the same sports club are not matched. A convenience sampling method using questionnaires was applied. Both group of respondents were asked to rank 12 selected competencies of competent board members according to importance (cognitive intelligence competencies: creativity, long term vision, professional; emotional intelligence competencies: reliability, motivation, hard working, honesty; social intelligence competencies: listening, good communicator, club interest, being jovial, strong personality) (Balduck and Van Rossem, 2010). Board members were also asked to score their cognitive style. The cognitive style questionnaire consisted of 26 items measuring four cognitive styles (knowing, planning, creating and cooperation) using a 5-point Likert scale (Cools and Van Den Broeck, 2007).

Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine the extent to which board members possessed the cognitive styles. Reliability analysis was implemented to confirm the internal consistency of the items. ANOVA was conducted to examine the extent to which board members and sports members differed in importance of competencies.

Results

The mean age of board members was $M = 45.05$, $SD = 11.98$. The mean age of sports members was $M = 25.22$, $SD = 12.47$. Reliability analyses of the cognitive style items were conducted and were acceptable: knowing (4 items, $\alpha = .64$), planning (7 items, $\alpha = .85$), creating (7 items, $\alpha = .74$), and cooperation (8 items, $\alpha = .79$).

Board members rated the cognitive style cooperation the highest ($M = 4.15$; $SD = 0.46$), followed by planning ($M = 3.99$; $SD = 0.63$), knowing ($M = 3.80$; $SD = 0.57$) and creating ($M = 3.72$; $SD = 0.48$).

Both board and sports members indicated that motivation, reliability, communication and being honest are the most important competencies for being a competent board member. ANOVA revealed a significant difference ($F = 11.72$, $p < .01$) between board members ($M = 7.91$, $SD = 3.53$) and sports members ($M = 6.23$, $SD = 3.32$) for being professional. There was also a significant difference ($F = 4.29$, $p < .05$) between board members ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 3.11$) and sports members ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 3.16$) for being honest.

Conclusion

Board members rated the cognitive style cooperation as the highest. Considering competencies, both groups indicated that social and emotional intelligence competencies are important to be a competent board member. These competencies might be important to be able to cooperate with other board members and, thus, these competencies might be important to possess the cognitive style cooperation. The results of this study are important in the process of securing competent and professional board members of sports clubs. This might result in validated measurement tools that help practitioners in the selection and evaluation of board members (Brown, 2007).

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