

A safe and respectful environment within voluntary sport clubs: the use of SWPBS

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Aim of the study

Safety in the sports environment is a growing concern of the policymakers and scholars in the Netherlands. Therefore, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport launched the policy action plan: Towards a safer sports climate (VWS, 2012), in 2011. The aim is to prevent violence and harassment in and around sports and to create a sports environment in which everyone can enjoy playing sport in safety. One of the target groups in the action plan are the directors of voluntary sport clubs (VSC). Because of various reasons they find it difficult to change the social climate within their club (Serkei et al., 2011). School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) is an approach that might help with this problem. The research question for this study is therefore: In which manner can (elements of) the SWPBS approach be applied to VSC's?

Theoretical background

SWPBS has proven to be a successful approach in education. The aim of this approach is to create a positive social environment that prevents behavior problems (e.g. Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). The approach starts with determining shared values. These values are translated into concrete behavioral expectations, which are then actively taught to the students. It is important that after the implementation, appropriate behavior must be systematically confirmed positive. Over the past few years, a tryout of (elements of) the SWPBS-approach were piloted in five different sports clubs, to explore how (elements of) the SWPBS-approach can be used in VSC's in the Netherlands.

Methodology

For this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the project leaders of the five participating VSC's. The project leaders are PBS-coaches and members of a growing SWPBS-sport network.

Results and discussion

The data gathering of this study is still in progress. Final results are expected by the end of May. Preliminary results reveal that certain principles of the SWPBS-approach can be successful in VSC's, but there are a certain number of contextual factors that should be taken into account. An example is that sports clubs in the Netherlands are voluntary based unions. This requires a new interpretation of the SWPBS-approach for Dutch sport clubs.

References

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