Rolling with the tackles

Helping handball players and coaches cope with club transition

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**Sammanfattning**

Studiens syfte var att undersöka ett lags uppfattning om hur klubbens övergång upplevs av både spelare och tränare, undersöka påverkan av klubbövergången på grundläggande psykologiska behov som upplevs av spelare samt tränare och slutligen göra en kortsiktig intervention i syfte att underlätta spelares anpassning till klubbövergången. Studien baseras på tre teorier: the Athletic Career Transitional Model, Självbestämmande-teorin och det holistiska ekologiska synsättet. Studiens deltagare representerade en klubb i södra Sverige och bestod av totalt 23 spelare åldern 15-17 (M = 15,96, SD = 0,64), klubbens manager, tränare och föräldrar. Studien var en mixed method interventionsstudie (enkät, semi-strukturerade intervjuer och en intervention bestående av utbildningstillfällen samt en implementeringsfas).

Resultatet visade att klubben fortfarande handskas med resterna av sin övergång trots att de förbiser det. Studien fann att klubben främst kräver elitsatsning från spelare, erfar hinder när det gäller individuella skillnader samt kommunikation inom klubben och resurser i form av omtyckta, välutbildade tränare. Dessutom fanns klubbövergången påverka alla grundläggande behov på något sätt, förändringen i ledningen förde positiva värderingar med sig med autonomistödjande åtgärder och tränare. Ökad elitsatsning påverkar och bristfällig kommunikation inom klubben påverkade också grundläggande behov. Resultat från interventionen samt implikationer med en grund i de teorier som används presenteras slutligen.

Nyckelord: Athletic Career Transitional Model, autonomistöd, grundläggande psykologiska behov, organisationskultur.
Abstract

The study’s purpose was to explore a team’s perception of transition within the club experienced by both players and coaches, investigate influences of the club’s transition on basic needs satisfaction as perceived by players as well as coaches and lastly conduct a short term intervention aimed at facilitating players’ adaptation to the club’s transition. The study is based on three theories: the Athletic Career Transitional Model, Self Determination theory and the holistic ecological approach. The study’s participants all represented a club in the south of Sweden and consisted of a total of 23 players at the age of 15-17 (M= 15.96, SD= 0.64), the club manager, coaches and parents. The study was a mixed method intervention study (questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and an intervention consisting of educational sessions and an implementation phase).

The study revealed that the club is still facilitating with remnants of its transition despite over-looking it. The study found the targeted club to predominantly demand elite investment from players, experience barriers regarding individual differences and communication within the club and resources in the form of popular, well-educated coaches. The club’s transition was found to influence all basic needs in some way, the change in management brought positive values with autonomy supportive measures and coaches. Increased elite investment and deficient communication within the club also influenced basic needs. Results from the intervention are presented as well as implications with a basis in the theories used.

Keywords: Athletic Career Transitional Model, autonomy support, basic psychological needs, organizational culture.
Rolling with the tackles: helping handball players and coaches cope with club transitions

“Change is inevitable. Change is constant” is a quote attributed to British author and statesman Benjamin Disraeli (Disraeli, n.d.). It is a remark on society as a whole and something we all must accept as a fact, everything around us is constantly in change. But how we react to or deal with the change is what forms and makes our future and the sport world is not an exception. How we train, nurture talent and prepare has changed a lot over the years in combination with what goal and purpose the athletes, coaches and trainers have had. At the dawning of sports and Olympic Games most of the elite athletes were amateurs representing their country or city. Nowadays the elite athletes are a part of and must stand out in the global sport industry which is predicted to reach revenues towards 145 billion dollars worldwide (Clark, 2011). In this industry, clubs must make efforts to facilitate for the best players and their development, deliver good results both in sports and economy-wise which entails changes being made continuously in order to gain an athletic, organizational or economic advantage over others. This places the athletes and clubs in extraordinary situations both regarding pressure and opportunities, with numerous forks in the road. At each crossroad the players’ choices and reactions as well as their environment and its reactions will determine if the change will benefit the continued development. The targeted club underwent a big change in 2013 when it merged with another handball club, creating two clubs under the same umbrella but still with different boards, goal and identities. One club was to nurture talent and facilitate for a youth development system (the tigers) and the other club was to attain youth players from the first and provide an elite level senior team with everything it entails (the sharks).

The concept of sport career transitions, adaptation and development in adulthood is one that has been around for a long time, with studies making waves in the 60’s and 70’s (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler & Côté, 2009) and it takes its ground in general psychology and counseling rather than sport psychology (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014). Mihovilovic began a study in 1968 regarding sports career termination in which he found that almost 95 % of the studied athletes had to terminate their career against their will, which they found painful (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Later on Schlossberg (1981) offered one of the first working models on transitions, later inspiring sport specific models. The human adaptation to the transition model as it’s called explains the process of transition in accordance with four factors acknowledged by Schlossberg as factors to take into consideration when intervening with (problematic) transitions. These factors are: situation (how the person perceives the transition), self (the individual’s profile), support (what social and what availability of social support available to the person) and strategies (information seeking or direct action strategies). This work however is solely focused on the individuals’ transition and does not take in to consideration the aspect of many athletes, teams or clubs as is facilitated in later studies (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014). Career transitions in many different forms have since the 90’s become a popular subject for studies in the sport psychology field and what specific direction those studies take are mostly influenced by the culture of the area where it’s conducted (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014).

In closing: transitions are closely related to change and further development and different cultures tend to choose different ways to adapt. As a club is undergoing a transition in itself, the players and coaches are both likely to be affected by this transition as a part of the club as well as undergoing individual ones. To keep the players well-motivated and allowing for the coaches to keep on helping with the players development should be a priority so as the clubs transition don’t backlash and cause more harm on the athletes’ development than benefits.
Definitions

**Athletic Career Transition.** “Transitions are predictable transitional phases between adjacent sports career stages or less predictable transitional phases caused by particular situations in athletes’ careers or lives more in general” (Stambulova, 2003, p. 98).

**Self-determined motivation.** “Motivation is defined as the amount of energy, the direction we focus our actions and intentions towards, the adherence we have and finally what path we follow to reach the final goal” (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation can be divided into two directions, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is closely associated with self-determination, and is defined as activities that people do naturally, voluntarily and spontaneously, when they feel free to perform their own interests. External motivation is the opposite of intrinsic and self-determined motivation, and is when people participate in an activity because they feel forced to so or to obtain external rewards.

**Basic psychological needs.** Humans basic psychological needs include; autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy is the need to be self-determined in one's choices and actions. Competence is the need to get the opportunity to both demonstrate and challenge one’s ability. Relatedness is the need to both give and receive support from others. According to Deci and Ryan (2000) an environment that is autonomy supportive is an environment that satisfies all of these psychological needs, which promotes intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being.

**Athletic Talent Development Environment.** An ATDE is a dynamic system comprising a) an athlete's immediate surroundings at the micro-level where athletic and personal development take place, b) the interrelations between these surroundings, c) at the macro-level, the larger context in which these surroundings are embedded, and d) the organizational culture of the sports club or team, which is an integrative factor of the ADTE's effectiveness in helping young talented athletes to develop into senior elite athletes. (Henriksen, 2010, p. 160).

**Organizational Culture.** A pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group has learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1985). This culture and its patterns may also be influenced by artefacts and espoused values (Schein, 1984).

**Theoretical frameworks**

**Athletic career transition model (Stambulova, 2003).** As mentioned in the definition earlier, career transitions are turning phases or shifts in athletes’ development associated with a set of specific demands that athletes have to cope with in order to continue successfully in sport and/or other spheres in their life (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014). These transitions in development are associated with specific demands that the athlete have to cope with to be able to continue successfully with their life either in the sport context or/as well as other spheres of their life. The transitions are divided into athletic- and non-athletic, both of which affect the athlete’s development and success in sport. Transitions are also divided into normative and non-normative transitions. Normative transitions are transitions that can be seen as normal and somewhat predictable. Logically the athlete realizes transitions are to occur at some points in their life because of their development on all levels in life for instance the transition into senior sport or transitioning into college/university after secondary school. These normative transitions are generally easy to prepare for and therefore the athlete is given an opportunity to cope with them in advance. Non-normative transitions are generally changes induced by less predictable changes. This can range from anything from injury to divorce or even a switch of team or coach. The less predictable nature of the non-normative transitions makes them harder to cope with for the athlete. A variety of career transition explanatory
models exist. The athletic career transition model (ACTM) is one of the most recognized models of late.

Figure 1. Athletic career transition model (adapted from Stambulova, 2003).

This model is to be read from top to bottom, it sees transitions as a process of coping with a set of transition demands to which the athlete uses different coping strategies to deal with these demands. Examples of these strategies are planning, searching for professional support and practicing more than the opposition etc. The effectiveness of this coping is, according to the model, depending on the dynamic balance of the resources and barriers available to the athlete. Resources are the various internal and external factors that make transitions easier, examples can for instance be: previous experiences and social and professional support. Barriers however refer to the internal and external factors that interfere with the coping process; examples of barriers are, for instance: low self-efficacy and lack of financial support. The model shows us two possible outcomes to the coping: successful transition and crisis-transition. A successful transition occurs when the athlete’s coping resources and strategies are adequate to facilitate the transition demands, the coping is seen as effective. Crisis-transition occurs when the resources and strategies are not able to handle the demands. This can be caused due to resources and/or high barriers and/or inappropriate
coping strategies. If the athletes are not able to cope with the transition independently but acknowledge the need for transition intervention, they must go through the stage of crisis-transition and acquire crisis coping intervention in order to proceed with the transition. The crisis-transition itself also have two outcomes secondary to the outcome of the first coping. Here one can have a “delayed” successful transition if the intervention to the crisis-transition is effective or an unsuccessful transition as is the case with no or ineffective intervention. An unsuccessful transition leads to negative consequences for the athlete, the worst of outcomes and the hardest to treat (whereas you’d rather prevent it in an earlier stage). Negative consequences can take its form in premature dropout, neuroses, eating disorders, substance abuse or overtraining just to mention a few alternatives.

**Basic tenets of Self-determination theory (SDT).** SDT is a multidimensional theory with roots in both cognitive and humanistic psychology (Ryan & Deci 2002). Its emphasis is on the social context and how it affects motivation, where behaviors can be either self-determined or controlled in nature, capturing both situational and personality aspects that are related to motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that an individual's behavior is the result of an individual's perceived motivation, where a motivated behavior is governed by what is to be achieved and why. SDT focuses on the quality of motivation in different situations, and how the environment affects the choice of activity. If an environment is perceived as controlling it reduces the self-determined motivation, and therefore weakens the commitment to the activity.

SDT distinguishes between different levels of motivation at a continuum of amotivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Amotivation contains no self-determination and includes individuals that fell incompetent and helpless, and see no point in participating in a particular activity. Extrinsic motivation is divided over four levels of external regulation (external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation). Intrinsic motivation is the last part of the continuum and is the highest degree of self-determination. Here, individuals are participating in an activity only because it feels natural, voluntarily and that the activity is associated with enjoyment and passion.

According to SDT self-determined motivation and psychological well-being can be attained only when we satisfy our basic psychological needs, being autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Depending on the social context, and individual differences these psychological needs are satisfied in different ways, but it requires all three to be satisfied for the individual to experience a high level of self-determined motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

**Basic tenets of the Holistic ecological perspective on talent career development (Henriksen, 2010).** What distinguishes the holistic ecological approach from other talent development models is that it focuses on the environment surrounding the athlete instead of looking at, for example, how early the athlete specializes, genes or how much he trains. The holistic and ecological approach consists of: definition of ATDE (see definition above), criteria for ATDE success, descriptive model of ATDE and model of Environment Success Factors (ESF) to describe how well a talent development environment works. The main purpose of the perspective is to help talented athletes to transition from the junior level to become a senior athlete at the highest level by analyzing the relationships and interactions of the athlete within its surroundings. In this paper only the ESF model will be used and discussed.
Environment Success Factors model (Henriksen, 2010). The environment success factors model (ESF) is an explanatory working model which explains how the daily routines and processes affect the success rate of the ATDE with the organizational culture in the center; it is explained by figure 2.

Organizational development and culture is the central part of the ESF model and it contains three levels each affecting each other: artefacts, espoused values and basic assumptions directly linked to the work by Schein (1984). Artefacts are hard to decipher but easy to detect, it contains stories and myths within the ATDE, also customs, traditions and physical cultural manifestations (e.g. clothing, buildings organization charts etc.). The espoused values contain the social principles, norms, goals and standards that the ATDEs organization shows towards others. The espoused values exist in the minds of the members and are visible and made aware to them. Basic assumptions consist of beliefs and assumptions that serve as underlying reasons for actions. The basic assumptions are no longer questioned but taken for granted and exist at a sub-conscious level. The organizational culture is dependent on the group’s development of these cultural expressions to provide stability within the group, educate new members about the culture and make adaptations when the environment deems it necessary.

In the end the ESF model predicts the success of the ATDE as a result of the interplay between preconditions, process, individual and team development and achievements with the organizational culture in the middle to get these different elements to integrate.
Empirical research

Transitions. The view on athletic career transitions have changed over the years from originally considering singular events, a particular interest in studying athletic career retirement has been evident (Mihovilovic, 1968; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994, 2001; Alfermann, Stambulova & Zemaityte, 2004; Torregrosa, Boixadós, Valiente, & Cruz, 2004; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004). More recent studies have however focused more on transitions more holistically as a process; within this holistic/process perspective one also find the ACTM as described earlier. Studies with this approach see various parts of the athletes’ development as transitions to cope with over a lengthy period of time (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004; Wylleman & Reints, 2010; Stambulova, 2000, 2010). This includes both athletic and non-athletic influences and development on different levels. Wylleman & Lavallee (2004) created a developmental perspective on transitions as faced by athletes, which divides the development in to the following levels: athletic, psychological, psychosocial and vocational/academic. It includes a general image of when different transitions should occur on the different levels depending on what age/development stage the athlete has reached.

Basic tenets of within career transition studies. Research has shown the transition from junior to senior/elite athlete to be difficult, only 17 percent of elite level junior athletes’ transition in to senior/elite sports within a five year time frame (Vanden Auweele et al., 2004). Shared findings of these studies show that the athletes perceive this transition as a huge step forward with much higher standards in practice and performance than experienced before (Stambulova, 1994; Stambulova, Franck & Weibull, 2012; Pummell, Harwood, Lavallee, 2008; Finn & McKenna, 2010). The athletes often experience increased levels of stress and sensitivity from social influences during this transition due to their ambitions to meet the expectations of significant others and uncertainty about their success in coping. The delicate age of the athletes also provide issues as things outside the sport context, such as school and social aspects, interfere (Bruner et. al., 2008). In regards to this the social support, especially from coaches, are instrumental in attaining a successful transition process. Coping strategies believed to help make transitions successful are: thoughtful problem solving, acceptance of responsibility, self-control and positive reappraisal. As has been believed for a time, athletes’ identity development and personal maturation was also shown in these studies as factors leading to successful transitions from junior to senior/elite levels (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004; Stambulova, 2009; Stambulova, 2012; Finn & McKenna, 2010; Bruner et. al., 2008), where an athlete all too closely related to its athletic identity will struggle with transitions, especially career termination (Grove, Lavallee & Gordon, 1997; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

Cultural differences have in earlier studies also been argued as a reason leading to various transitional factors having different impacts on different athletes. This also suggest that the different intervention methods and coach behaviors should be adapted to the culture to facilitate a better transition (Stambulova, Stephan & Jäphag, 2007; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013) also suggested by the International Society of Sport Psychology (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler & Côté, 2009).

Findings made in the crisis-transition study (Stambulova, 2003) where a narrative analysis was made on athletes’ experiences during crisis complements the ACTM. The study provided two things: 1. a set of symptoms of crisis-transitions; these include loss of self-esteem, chronic emotional discomfort, hypersensitivities to mistakes and failures, disorientation in decision-making and dysfunctional behavior and 2. an empirical classification with 15 types of athletes’ crises based on their major content, this included relationship crisis, moral crisis, crisis of overtraining or crisis of re-adaptation after a break to mention only a few.

A recent study suggests a five step plan to facilitate athletes transitions, which if used can prevent the need of interventions for athletes to cope with transitions (Stambulova, 2010).
The five steps are described as: 1. Create a framework. 2. Structure your past. 3. Structure your present. 4. Structure your future. 5. Bridge past, present and future. Within some of these steps a ranking of your priorities is needed to be able to fully structure your situation, for instance when structuring your present. This plan gives the athlete and the counselor assisting with the plan a truly holistic perspective on the athlete’s life and influences. This helps to create targeted issues to deal with, in and outside the athletic domain. Since it works holistically it can also be used for anyone experiencing a career transition, not necessarily an active athlete. However special considerations have to be made regarding for instance the athlete’s age/maturity level and mental health status, but also the consultant’s training level, and the status of the consultant-client relationship.

**Basic tenets of student-athletes transitions.** Findings from studies are mainly divided between North America and Europe in regards to the different educational systems. Findings in North American research state that the normative transition from high school to college from the start puts a set of demands on the incoming students. Besides from joining a college sport program where athletes have to adjust to high-demanding sport participation on an intercollegiate level and new team mates and coaches, they also have to meet new academic standards, live away from home, create new relationships as well as manage their time and energy. Non-normative transitions such as injury and not being selected on the team also play part as with most athletes (Petitpas, Brewer & Van Raalte, 1996). On top of this college athletes also have to face the transition of sport career termination as they have to move on after graduation, where studies have found athletes who have a strong athletic identity will experience more difficulties in coping with transitions (Murphy, Petitpas & Brewer, 1996).

In Europe the student-athletes are by researchers considered as having a dual career which is defined as: “a career with two major foci: sport and studies or work.” (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014 p. 612). Athletes considered having dual careers are those who combine sport and education at regular, schools, sport classes, boarding schools or universities. The European studies showed the athletes benefiting from dual careers using the holistic lifespan perspective, considering the athlete as a whole person with influences outside sport (Wylleman & Reints, 2010). The studies highlighted that the dual-career athletes benefitted in areas of a balanced lifestyle, reduced stress, good conditions for developing life skills and higher employability after sport. The athletes were also able to emphasize related problems and demands when experiencing transitions to a new level in sport and/or education (Alfermann, Stambulova & Zemaitytė, 2004; Elbe & Beckmann, 2006; Stambulova, Stephan & Jäphag, 2007; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). For example one of the studies reported that the athletes experienced new demands in sport and studies as well as their private life and adjusted easier to the sport aspect of their dual careers than to the educational aspect and that their athletic identity was significantly higher than their student identity. The athletes also reported “giving 100 per cent” as their main coping strategy which likely put these people in risk for chronic fatigue or burnout (Stambulova, Engström, Franck & Linnér, 2012).

In 2012 the European Union Commission also issued guidelines on dual careers of athletes where policies are to support a series of actions for dual careers in high performance sports. These policies, based on empirical research and supported by experts on the field, includes special arrangements between sport and educational system to assist athletes to both sustain athletic and academic-vocational development and at the same time ensuring that they are ready for their athletic retirement (European Union Commission, 2012).

**Autonomy support and basic needs satisfaction in young athletes.** Previous research on autonomy support provides links between interpersonal behaviors and positive outcomes on basic needs satisfaction. However predictors of autonomy supportive behavior have received much less empirical attention. Recently, researchers in academic, physical
education and sport settings have begun to examine the environment and psychological factors that determine these interpersonal behaviors (Rocchi, Pelletier & Couture, 2013).

According to Deci (2014) a need-supportive environment is defined as an environment that relate from the other’s perspective, encourage self-initiation and experimentation, offer relevant choices, calibrate for optimal challenge, focus on indirect rather than direct competition, provide meaningful feedback, give a rationale for requested behavior and minimize use of controlling language.

Adie, Duda & Ntoumanis (2012) argue that an autonomy supportive environment alone can satisfy all three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. That is if the environments empowers the young athletes with choices and decision making (autonomy support), convey trust in their abilities through non-controlling feedback (competence support) and take and respect the young athletes perspective (relatedness support). They argue that this kind of environment will lead to sustaining optimal functioning in youth sport. Jõesaar, Hein & Hagger (2011) research also highlights the importance of autonomy support and basic needs satisfaction. Their research indicated that motivation to participate in activity will be enhanced when young athletes are given control and choice and are encouraged to be mastery-involved by significant others.

Young athletes will experience autonomy support from their coach when they feel that their perspective is valued and when there are given rationales for requested activities. To support the need for competence coaches could involve their young athletes in the evaluation process of their own performance (Reinboth & Duda, 2006). Competence can even be satisfied through positive feedback, if the feedback is delivered in a non-controlling way (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Reinboth and Duda (2006) the need for relatedness is satisfied if the young athlete perceive them self to be valued, listened to and supported by the coach and the teammates. Cohesion has also showed to have positive effects on relatedness, interestingly enough; it has also showed to have positive effects on autonomy and competence (Blanchard, Amio, Perreault & Vallerand, 2009).

Coaches, parents and peers play a significant role in how young athletes perceive satisfaction in the basic needs (Keegan, Harwood, Spray & Lavalle, 2008). Evidence of how this is provided successfully is through collaborative leadership styles, facilitating the formation of friendship and the establishing of group identity, also friendship and affiliations among peers is an important component for satisfaction in the basic needs (Keegan, Harwood, Spray & Lavalle, 2008). Gagne (2003) establish in his study on young gymnast perception on coaches and parents autonomy support, that the more autonomy supportive and involved parents and coaches were perceived, the more autonomously motivated the gymnasts were.

On the basis of previous research the general conclusion is that people benefit when others support their autonomy, which promotes psychological well-being (Su & Reeve, 2011) and basic needs satisfaction.

**Club transition and Organizational culture.** One of the few empirical texts found regarding a club in transition was a sports management report on an Australian rules football team (Shilbury & Hooper, 1999). That report described a clubs rise to success, highlighting a strong organizational culture as something that creates coordination, control and encourages consistency. With this it also reduces conflict and uncertainty, which in turn creates a competitive advantage. The report also recognizes that the nature of culture rarely remains stable and continually evolves, as the club itself has to react to external adaptation and internal integration (Brown, 1995).

**Previous study and ESF (Andersson & Dahl, 2015).** The previous study conducted in this environment showed a club in re-organization with an enthusiasm to evolve and become better. The environment was developing in a direction that promoted basic needs satisfaction and was mastery oriented. Of course certain strides were needed to be taken in order for the
environment to be all together successful, most importantly regarding communication within the club but also communication towards schools and parents, there were measures to be taken. Other findings in the study regarded the lack of sport psychologists within the club and possibilities to work more on injury prevention. Derived in the previous study were the environment success factors to be used within this study, especially focusing on the organizational culture. The empirical ESF model is presented below.

**Figure 3. Empirical ESF model of “the tigers”** (Andersson & Dahl, 2015)

**Summary and objectives**

In summary, the author has worked with this club before and recognized that it is in a stage of transformation both since merging with another, elite level, club in 2013 and as the goals and methods of the club has changed since then. Also the athletes in the club are at a delicate stage where transitions and changes within the club can make or break them as elite level athletes. Therefore it would be very interesting both from a sport psychology stand point and from the clubs stand point to identify what transitional factors the players and coaches is concerned about and give them tools to cope with the transition. This should also be related to SDT in an attempt to promote basic needs satisfaction in order further the development of youth players. Therefore the following objectives have been made:

1. Explore the team’s perception of transition within the club experienced by both players and coaches.
2. Investigate influences of the clubs transition on basic needs satisfaction as perceived by players as well as coaches.
Conduct short term intervention aimed at facilitating players adaptation to the clubs transition

Method

Research Design

The research design chosen for this study is a mixed method intervention study, this in order to attain both qualitative and quantitative data to back up any findings giving an in-depth look at the clubs transition and the players perception of it. This study is based on combining different methods to later summarize and relate different parts of the result with each other. The combined data collection methods were: a questionnaire, interviews, and an intervention containing educational sessions and an implementation phase.

By using a combination of different methods the author could at a profound level study the athletes’ perception of the transition within the club and what demands, barriers and resources they experience. The perceived basic needs satisfaction from both coaches and players perspectives were also studied at a deep level thanks to this. All this was studied in a specific handball club in the south of Sweden.

Participants

The environment chosen for this study is the same group that was studied in the earlier case study by Andersson and Dahl (2015). The targeted club merged with another club to create a more profitable and economic solution to exercise handball locally. The one club kept its elite team and let the targeted club take over the responsibility for its youth development system. Both clubs have their own board.

The members of the environment used in this study were a total of 23 male handball players at the age of 15-17 (M= 15,96, SD= 0,64) and its coaches. This environment was originally chosen because the players of this environment are recognized as “talented” but haven’t yet made it to the senior elite level. More specifically, the players of the study are approaching their transition from talented junior to senior/elite athletes. Beside the target group of prospective elite handball players, the environment consists of other participants, such as parents and managers that took part in the intervention.

Instruments

Sports Climate Questionnaire (SCQ). The SCQ has a long form containing 15 items and a short form containing 6 of the items, in this case the 15 item version were used. The questionnaire is typically used in regards to specific coaches or similar individuals with respect to a sport or physical activity. The questions pertain to the basic needs satisfaction of the respondent’s coach, trainer, or sport/exercise instructor and is graded from one (lowest) to seven (highest) and contains one question where a lower graded answer indicates a high level of qualitative communication. The questionnaire used in this study was a version translated into Swedish used in order to secure the participants understanding of the questions (Self-determination Theory, n.d.)

Interview guides. Loosely structured interview guides were created with a purpose to encourage a narrative type of interview. The guides were designed to allow for reflection on barriers and resources of the club and its transition as well as reflections upon perceived basic needs satisfaction within the club. The same interview guide was used for both players and coaches with some small exceptions. The interview guides were structured into four main parts. Part one contained information about the study’s ethical issues and the purpose of the study, part two contained questions about the interviewee’s background. Part three contained questions regarding their immediate perceptions of the barriers, resources and demands within the club related to their development as handball players. Lastly part four concerned perception of basic needs satisfaction (See appendixes 4 and 5).
Follow-up interviews regarding the implementation of the intervention and perceived effects on basic needs satisfaction were held with the participants. Another type of loosely structured interview guides were used for these interviews (appendixes 6 and 7).

Procedure

After the environment had been selected, contact was made through telephone with the manager, where the purpose of the study was explained. After interest had been shown the study was described in person and in more detail.

Through a signed consent letter from the participants it was agreed that the identity of the team could be disclosed but the names of individuals would be kept confidential. As this paper concerns the same club as in Anderssons and Dahls (2015) study, it was decided to keep the name of the club confidential to avoid ethical issues.

The participants were also informed that they had the right to terminate their participation at any time. The manager acted as a deputy parent permitting contact and participation of the underage players (see appendix 1). Each player signed a letter of consent (see appendix 2) when filling in the SCQ in order for the author to be able to terminate any usage of that individual’s questionnaire at a later stage. The manager gave me permission to observe any practice sessions and games I wanted to and to hold educational sessions, interventions and interviews at given times.

Initially all the players of the team provided data through a questionnaire (appendix 3). As the quantitative data had been analyzed, interviews where set up and conducted in order to get at deeper understanding of the perceived transition within the club and deeper understanding of the results of the questionnaire. An intervention consisting of two parts: 1. educational sessions and 2. implementation, were held with the team, both players and coaches attended. At first educational sessions were held where discussion was encouraged in order to gather even further data on the perception of the transition and basic needs satisfaction. Lastly the implementation part was conducted where tips and tools were given to players and coaches to use in their continued development in an attempt to help facilitate adaptation to the clubs transition and promote further development of players within the club. After the intervention, time was given so that coaches and players had possibilities to utilize the tips provided. After 2 weeks individual follow-up interviews were conducted with both the players and the coach in order to evaluate to what extent the intervention has been implemented.

It was agreed that the findings would be shown to the environment for their approval; the authors would present the result to the coaches and manager, and have a dialogue about the findings and potential areas of improvement.

Intervention. A short term intervention that consisted of two parts: 1. educational sessions and 2. implementation. The goals of the intervention were:

1. Educate the participants on related sport psychology theories
2. Further investigate the teams collective perception of club transition and basic needs support
3. Suggest collective strategies to adapt to club transition

Educational sessions. Educational sessions were held in the form of three presentations on the theories mentioned above, all of which contained some discussion amongst the players on their perceived situation. The sessions lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The different theories were presented to the players using models and text from sources used in this thesis. Presentations were made using printed copies of power points to help the author present the theories and also for him to make notes of what the players discussed regarding each “slide”. The coaches and manager were also able to attend some part of the sessions which started off discussing Self-determination and basic needs. The
second session discussed the ESF empirical model of the club as derived by Andersson and Dahl (2015) and the clubs resources, barriers and long-term plans were discussed. Lastly the ACTM was presented together with tips and tools. The sessions were designed as lectures that encouraged participation and reflection from the players and were held in conjunction with training. The first and last session was held just prior to training and the second was held just after another training session.

**Implementation.** During the last session coaches received tips on how to implement basic needs supportive measures and transition coping resources. Players were given tools on resources available and how and when to use them in order to encourage further development. The tips to the players (appendix 8) were based off of the results of the SCQ and findings in the interview, highlighting things that the players themselves can do to affect their own situation and empower themselves. Those findings were matched and compared with the thoughts on psychological skills training by Dosil et. al. (2014) to create valid points. The tips to the coaches (appendix 9) were derived from the same sources but altered to fit the coaches’ point of view and also included some tips on communication as described by Sullivan, Jowett and Rhind (2014). The tips and tools were handed out in writing as well as presented verbally.

**Data collection.** The SCQ was handed out just before one of the training sessions of the U16-team. 23 players aged 15-17 (M= 15,96, SD= 0,64) answered the questionnaire out and 21 were filled in properly. The two not properly filled in had not put a score on one of the questions therefore their answers for those specific questions were scored to a zero.

All formal interviews lasted between 21 and 36 minutes and were recorded for later transcription. Interviews were conducted in connection to the participant’s club or home environment and a total of two players and one coach (M=17,33, SD=2,3) were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with two players at the age of 16 of which one was the team captain. Both players played in the U16- team and occasionally also with the junior elite team. Interviews were also conducted with one of the four coaches of the team, this one at age 20. A number of informal talks were also held with parents and helpers within the team that furthered the picture presented. Follow up interviews were later held with the same participants and they lasted between 10 and 20 minutes, using the same methods but different interview guides (Appendixes 6 and 7).

Some data was collected during the educational sessions and the open discussions held there. At the time of the sessions the entire team took part, even coaches and the manager at occasion.

**Data analysis**

In the first step of the data analysis the answers to the questionnaire were analyzed using IBM SPSS and presented using descriptive statistics.

After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed verbatim, which altogether came up to 22 pages. The interviews were then analyzed with a narrative approach using a holistic content analysis to see common patterns and derive demands, barriers and resources as perceived by both players and coaches. At first the texts were read separately to become more familiar with them and then re-read until a pattern emerged within each of the interviews. After this those patterns and stories where written down to be compared, seeing both consistent patterns as well as stories that are contradictory. With the objectives formed, demands, barriers, resources and influences on basic needs where chosen to be the themes. Under these themes different segments of the entire text were categorized so in each theme different stories and factors influencing demands, barriers, resources and influences on basic needs were visible.

The follow-up interviews were held two weeks after the intervention and transcribed verbatim in close succession. The follow-up interviews were then analyzed in the same manner as the main interviews, using a narrative approach with a holistic content analysis.
The follow-up interviews came up to a total of 12 pages. Lastly notes taken during the educational sessions were compared to the results from interviews to add to the matching patterns. The results have been sent via email to the manager of the club and a meeting was set up to share the results in more detail.

Results

Just as in Andersson and Dahls (2015) bachelor thesis the targeted club and environment will be referred to as “the Tigers” and the parenting club will be called “the Sharks” in the results in order to make it clear for the readers.

Sports Climate Questionnaire

At first, a descriptive analysis of the data was made as there was no hypothesis the author wanted to create his own image of what areas to intervene on. The analysis showed a homogenous result where the coaches are highly appreciated especially in the areas of giving choices to the players (M= 6,30, Sd= 0,82), acceptance of the players (M= 6,70, Sd= 0,63) and understanding the purpose of the training (M= 6,52, Sd= 0,73). The athletes also seem to like how the coach(es) speaks to them (M= 1,70, Sd= 1,22) as higher score indicates a disliking. The areas with the lowest score concerned coaches trying to understand the athletes view (M= 5,39, Sd= 1,78) and coaches encouraging questions (M= 5,70, Sd= 1,52). This is shown in full in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for results of SCQ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Choices</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5,00</td>
<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,30</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.68</td>
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<td>Understanding</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3,00</td>
<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,00</td>
<td>1,09</td>
<td>1,18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak freely</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3,00</td>
<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,35</td>
<td>1,15</td>
<td>1,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in competence</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,04</td>
<td>1,11</td>
<td>1,23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
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<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,70</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding purpose of training</td>
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<td>5,00</td>
<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,52</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages questions</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>7,00</td>
<td>5,70</td>
<td>1,52</td>
<td>2,31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in coach</td>
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<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,39</td>
<td>1,12</td>
<td>1,25</td>
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<td>Answer questions thorough</td>
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<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,13</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listens</td>
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<td>7,00</td>
<td>5,86</td>
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<td>Handle emotions</td>
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<td>7,00</td>
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<td>Don't like how coach speaks</td>
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<td>1,00</td>
<td>5,00</td>
<td>1,70</td>
<td>1,22</td>
<td>1,49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tries to understand my point of view</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>7,00</td>
<td>5,39</td>
<td>1,78</td>
<td>3,16</td>
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<td>Tell how I feel</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>7,00</td>
<td>6,17</td>
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<td>1,79</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
**Interviews and educational sessions**

Below will findings from the interviews and educational sessions be presented, first of all what has occurred within the club and it’s ESF to create a transition, then demands barriers and resources as experienced by players and coaches. Lastly how the demands, barriers and resources have influenced the perception of basic needs satisfaction.

**Changes in ESF.** With the merger the new manager arrived and changes have come to the ESF of the tigers. The compiled image of the club is that since 2013 it has undergone a big transition which all participants find positive; however it still needs some time and effort to let it root down.

**Preconditions.** With the merger of the clubs, the activity for the tigers has grown and more members have joined, naturally since the tigers are now the only club in the local area that has a youth development system. This has created changes in the preconditions for the club, more players and different coaches have joined, but more expenses have arrived with this as well creating a situation where financial resources are limited. Also handball as a whole in Sweden has for a time had financial issues affecting all clubs (Gustafsson, 2008, Dec.10). With the new manager other preconditions arrived as he brought forth a change in how to approach training with the coaches at his disposal. The coaches the tigers have got to work with since 2013 have a close relationship with the players, are highly appreciated by them and more professional now. It used to be volunteering parents that did the coaching for the tigers but the coaches now are more well-educated and experienced than the parents. Although fewer than the less educated parents their competence makes for a sufficient level of human resources. The manager has played a key role in this as he banned parents from being coaches, one player elaborates:

One major difference is the parents, they don’t get to be the coaches anymore and then it's also a little more elite investment, you know how we train. He's [the manager] been a player for 16 years, with professional players, and he has seen very much, therefore he has a lot of experience and so on he also has an eye on what exercises you should do and how to train up like this, a young kid to be good, otherwise it’s a lot of positive criticism. It's like if someone does something really bad it is not like: “shit, come on now” but instead, he says it in a good way so you get pumped up, and that's probably a very big difference that I can see between then and now.

This also goes for the material resources that are utilized in a greater variety of ways, it should be noted though that in Andersson and Dahls (2015) study the need for more venues to train in were stressed and is no different.

**Process.** The coaches now work more on individualized training regimes to facilitate the development of the players. The players are also encouraged to experiment and use their imagination during training and matches instead of being controlled into one solution or the other. Although when training basics and on details the coaches take a more demanding and controlling position than they do for exercises mimicking actual game play. One of the coaches says:

What I feel very much is that I just want to fill the boys' backpacks with tools then they should be able to use them then they should also know in what situation they will use them. Then of course I decide what tools they should get after that it is up to them if they want to use the tools. But then, I stress that they should have imagination once you play. At that, OK, I see this: where is the opportunity? What am I good at? What can I do?

The coaches have patience with the development of players, both regarding the individual differences and with the desired peak of the players’ development. The tigers play more handball now than before as part of their training regime and focus more on playing their own
type of handball, regardless of the result, than adapting to the opponents to try and get a result going their way.

Both organizations have made it a priority to facilitate for homegrown players within its ranks. The players that are studied have played together a long time but naturally as they grow older new acquaintances are made; also the high schools nationwide recruiting system assures that new players are brought to the club with some interval. The tigers and their players are continually trying to work on facilitating for the new players as they arrive to the club since they recognize that it can be hard to move to a new club, especially if the local players have such a strong bond and togetherness as these.

**Organizational culture.** Looking at the ESF described by Andersson & Dahl (2015) uniforms and symbols have since 2013 changed for the tigers into uniforms and symbols which look similar to those of the sharks, even the victory song mentioned is the same song that the sharks use. Still responsibility and a feeling of pride to wear the colors have been installed in the players.

The concept of “Bubblan (“the Bubble”) also stem from the manager. It is a way to create, rules, norms and a higher level of togetherness amongst the players later described in more detail. With the new regime an autonomy supportive style of coaching arrived to the tigers where developing psychosocial skills are seen as something important and positive for the player’s development in and outside of handball.

Before the merger the tigers had few former elite level athletes engaged in the club, since the collaboration with the sharks it has become a more natural thing to step over to the tigers organization, for instance after retiring as an active player with the sharks. The manager of the tigers came in to the organization that way and so did the coach of the tigers’ junior team.

The manager promotes keeping a positive attitude and outlook to take on any upcoming challenges, “winners find solutions” is a quote that the players attribute to him, the mottos mentioned also came about after he joined the club. More players are willing and determined on becoming elite level players than before 2013, as they now have proximal role models (Henriksen, 2010) and are motivated into seeing a future in professional handballing.

It is mentioned earlier in the text and the players describe it as markedly with higher demands and expectations on the players now than before the merger. The feeling among the players is that before the manager arrived the club had a bigger focus on letting the players have fun, play and attract a lot of players to the club than it’s more elite investment and developmental mindset the club has adopted since.

The players feel a greater possibility of making it to the elite level and the sharks’ elite team than before, this thanks to the merger. When asked whether or not it’s a good club to develop in, one of the players said:

I think so, because the club is making an elite investment now when we're 15, 16 years if you want to, and I think that’s good. We have something, I'm not quite sure what, but we have some, connection between the two clubs and I know a few guys born in - 98 a years older than me, they play with, train with the first team and I think it's good to bring them up when they are a bit like younger and shows good, yeah potential as well. So I think it's a good team to come up through.

The club has since the transition started become more oriented on developing elite athletes than having a broad group of athletes within the club since merging with the sharks, still the mottos of the tigers: enjoyment – humility – pride – responsibility, doesn’t really reflect on this and neither does its policy and training documents (Andersson & Dahl, 2015). The mottos can be found within the espoused values of the clubs organizational culture (Andersson & Dahl, 2015).
**Demands.** It’s expected that all players within the tigers organization wants to become elite level athletes as they reach the age of about 15 years old. This affects the demands perceived by players and communicated through coaches.

**Elite investment.** The club demands a serious investment in becoming elite athletes, and everything that it entails from the players, which in term have made the players demand it from each other. This elite investment is described earlier and within the clubs basic assumptions (Andersson & Dahl, 2015). For example the players are obligated to report if and why they won’t come to training on beforehand. It takes a lot of effort and hard work to become an elite level player and in order for the coaches to recognize the investment from players, two specific things are demanded: focus and the right attitude.

**Focus.** A high level of focus is demanded of the players to momentarily shut out the world outside and focus on becoming a better handball player, contribute to the team and its development. Right here, right now is some sort of a mantra for the tigers. This focus is expected at every training session but highlighted especially during matches. When asked about the players spare time and if they come prepared for training sessions one of the coaches said: “They absolutely are and you notice also on Saturday mornings when we have some training sessions that they will be alert and rested and so it’s clear that they are actually concerned about what they do”.

**The right attitude.** Hand in hand with the focus comes the demand of having the right attitude, being determined to never quit and keeping on pushing to become a better handball player. It’s almost an expectation that the players are to have a professional attitude and behavior regarding training, nutrition, life-style etc. as an elite level player would. It’s almost as if the coaches are preparing the players at this stage for the life of an elite level handball player. On this one of the players once again talks about the importance of the manager’s role:

I think it is, the manager helped a lot there, when he came, he took like a, he took a ... It was just something that happened there, and since then I have developed extremely much and I think it is a bit of my own attitude and what I'm aiming for, too, because I want to really develop, I want to be as good as I can.

**Barriers.** Barriers exist in a variety of ways, most of which are overlooked by players or go unnoticed to, a lot of the barriers could only be derived after some persistence during the interviews and also when adding the interview of the coach to the players..

**Individual differences.** The quality level varies between the players, it is clear and evident for them and at times they find it frustrating. This goes hand in hand with the fact that the players’ goals vary a great deal, some are still happy just to play for fun and some are trying hard to develop quickly into playing for the senior teams within the tigers and at an elite level with the sharks. Some players even talk openly about their will to become national team players and professionals playing abroad. In connection with this, the players realize that as being part of a team you can’t always do what you want and be totally independent, adaptation and compromises needs to be made that influence the entire team and the atmosphere within it.

**Rotation of players.** The tigers’ activity is connected to the Swedish school system and its handball classes, as a result there’s a natural rotation of players coming in to the club outside of what is to be considered normal. Normally players are brought up within the club as they grow older and some age groups span across several years, for instance: the players born in -99 used to play with those born -98 but are not allowed to anymore so they play with the ones born -00 from now and for the next year. This creates a natural rotation that is in some ways seen as positive but also divides an already established team and group. Also the players within the tigers can and do, in accordance to their policy documents, play for multiple teams within the organization depending on their personal level of play; some players born -98 are even knocking on the door to play for the sharks. These things together
all create a great deal of rotation amongst the players that can take focus from the goal of trying to develop in to better players instead causing more focus to be shifted on performing and handling team development and dynamics.

**Deficient communication.** There is a lack of communication within the club, especially between the board of the tigers and its players. Even though the club manager is also a coach for the studied team they don’t know of the motto’s. Coaches also feel the club don’t communicate clearly enough within itself, for instance when bringing players in from the younger teams it might collide with another match or the player has just completed a 90 minute training session when joining in for the match. One of the players where asked on how they feel affected by the board and said:

> I do not know, I almost do not know who's on the board, I know [name of board member] but it's not that I know of them doing anything. They might be doing something but not that I know about, it's not that I hear that they're doing this and that for us.

All forms of deficient communication within the club have been mentioned earlier in the club’s basic assumptions as “double standards in communication” (Andersson & Dahl, 2015).

**Parents.** Recently concern has been voiced regarding how the team and the tigers as a club are managed. Some of the players doubt the work of the manager but predominantly its parents within the club that has expressed concern. For instance the fact that they no longer are allowed to coach is seen as something negative from the parents. The parents of the players are very opinionated as to how the sharks are to handle the club and teams and voice their concern openly, even at matches and from the stands. A player mentioned this concern by saying:

> Some players and some parents think that he [the manager] acts wrong in certain situations, for instance regarding parents as coaches where some think parents should be able to coach when he has a rule for the club that parents cannot coach when we reach ages of 15 or 14 or whatever it is and some people think it’s bad, and some think it's good.

The communication between coaches and parents are under development and deeper bonds are continually forming. Due to the concerns, parents demand more insight into the team and club and the coaches are working to satisfy this demand in a better fashion than before.

**Few training sessions.** Players mentioned that they would like to have more training sessions and especially to play more friendly matches. That allows the players to face a greater variety of teams and more challenging teams during pre-season friendly matches to prepare and to get to prove themselves in a different type of surrounding. To put in more hours of practice is especially important for the players that have set their minds on becoming elite level players as this would make them feel as they are achieving the goal quicker. This can however be hard to facilitate and can cause a more stressful situation for athletes when trying to balance the sport life with the rest of their life.

**Resources.** Most resources found are at least in part influenced by the coaches and how the players perceive them. Others are influenced by the coaches ideas or behaviors, which in turn derive from philosophies of the manager and opportunities opened up by him.

**Coaches.** The amount of coaches, which has increased since 2013, is a resource for the club, something also mentioned in the preconditions of the ESF (Andersson & Dahl, 2015). In the particular team studied, a minimum of four coaches are present at the training sessions allowing for more personalized feedback and instructions to be handed out.

**Individualized training.** This also creates a situation where more individualized training is possible, something especially important in handball where each unique position
played are expected to have a certain skill set different from the other positions. When asked about the development of the team and its individuals, one player said:

As individuals we have gained a lot [of knowledge] when we have had many coaches with, which has been specific in that position and then individuals have it, well the whole team has also become better when we’ve got team exercises and stuff like that so I think that the team has developed very much

Coach-player communication. The coaches also communicate with the players in a fashion that most players appreciate and find useful in order to develop in to better handball players. When asked about how coaches correct the players in training, this example was given: “They give us, like, various options like this, different things that one can do/…/ then it's like totally up to you what to do”. With this the coaches also promote autonomous values and the importance of players making their own decisions, which is also mentioned in earlier passages.

Autonomy support. Players having their own thoughts, opinions and ideas are promoted and encouraged; this can be found as a basic assumption within the club as it promotes an autonomy supportive environment (Andersson & Dahl, 2015). Opinions are for example collected by the coaches and changes are implemented if the coach finds the players opinion to be of relevance and value.

Competent and role models. The coaches are generally well-educated in the Swedish handball federation’s guidelines for coaches and have undergone its courses. They are also well versed in the club’s own documents and policies and understand the underlying thoughts behind them. Furthermore the manager have a widespread web of contacts within the elite handball scene, in Sweden especially but also all over Europe. This is used by the club in various ways, for instance special physical training regimes developed by a prominent former national team player are shared within the club. Within the club there are also a lot of role models, for instance active players within the sharks’ and tigers’ organization but also coaches that used to play at the highest Swedish and European levels before retiring, mentioned clearly in the espoused values of the club (Andersson and Dahl, 2015).

Togetherness. As previously reported the players have a feeling of togetherness that is both evident and spoken about amongst the tigers’ organization and is described as a basic assumption within the clubs organizational culture. When asked of what the best thing about his club is, a player said:

It’s probably that we know each other so well, has such a good atmosphere in the team. That's one thing I heard from people outside [the team] as well. We get some new players now and they have said that they have chosen us because we've had it so good together and were fun to be with as well and I think that it's probably the best thing about our team, that we know each other as well as we do.

Positive attitude and enjoyment. A positive spirit and attitude is promoted by coaches and the manager and the feeling of joy and enjoyment in training is genuine and clear to see. The team and club also arrange social events in order to keep this feeling of togetherness and relatedness strong, this positive attitude is also evident as an espoused value within the club (Andersson and Dahl, 2015).

The Bubble. “The Bubble” is also something that helps players and the team studied in particular to focus on what they find essential and be successful. It’s a policy or idea that the players all have agreed upon that dictates what the atmosphere and attitude is supposed to be like in order for them to be successful. It includes what actions, feelings and thoughts the team bring with them to contribute to the team’s success but also what things have the exact opposite effect and needs to be kept away. The coaches can ask the players to “go inside the bubble” which means that all focus is on the present and only on handball, all agreed upon thoughts and feelings are brought forth and unwanted things are kept away. “The Bubble” is
something that they can refer to at any point and time and is being talked about so that every player understands and feels safe about it. It’s a tool for the coaches to tell the players that it’s to focus and be serious but also to bring the team together and closer to each other. It’s also considered a type of artefact for the team as they create a banner with the values, ideas and everything else concerned with “The Bubble” (Andersson and Dahl, 2015).

**Follow-up interviews.** The follow-up interviews were done in order to evaluate and understand the effects of the intervention. It also created an opportunity to further clarify things discussed during the intervention and learn about what reflections had been made after the educational sessions.

**Effects of the tips.** Both players admitted that they had not reflected on the tips to any greater extent but both had kept the hand-out and one of them admittedly was thinking of actively working with some tips but hadn’t gotten around to it. The coach however had reflected more on the tips especially regarding the communication within the club which he had started to work on and also was preparing future measures. The plan is to engage the club’s board and make them more visible for players, within this also work with keeping goals, policies and the mottos more in focus. The thought here is also to make the players more aware of the goals and demands that the club’s board has for them as they at this point barely know who’s on the board.

What the coach later reveals makes him more apprehensive about the idea and about communication between the two club boards is apparently still rooted since the boards has barely changed since 2013, with the manager of the tigers being the exception. Some changes within the board would be well needed, he claims, as some of the animosity is deeply rooted. The coach would like to see a younger face with more drive that can help the club on its new path instead of the same old faces. Since the new manager is the only one bringing new ideas into the tigers’ organization he faces a lot of resistance when trying to bring forward new ideas.

**Reflections on theories.** The players had reflected more on the basic needs than on the ACTM, demands, resources and barriers. Especially regarding autonomy they had started to reflect on when they were given choices and upon what parts of their training. The players are given choices in a variety of things, more so now than before the intervention according to the interviews. The coaches were in many senses autonomy supportive before as described earlier but one of the players described how the coaches were more inviting to hear players’ views and how they want to perform certain combination plays. This is what he had noticed:

> But I have felt that we have many choices during a workout. We can go off if we want to or keep going. It’s been a lot of physical training of late, it has not been that much handball we have had about one handball training but also during the physical training one can always choose whether to run or, it is the player's choice/.../ It feels better than if they force one to do something that you might not feel entirely one hundred percent about.

The coach has reflected on both theories, most noticeably he put more effort in team building at an earlier point this season. As new players arrive from the school system and through the clubs own ranks the coaching team had put emphasis on the relatedness and tried to get the players together at an earlier stage which seemed to have paid off. One of the players had noticed a change in the atmosphere since last season and felt he “knows the guys, it’s a completely different thing than it was with the -98s because then you hardly knew them” compared to this point last year. The educational sessions has helped to enlighten the importance and benefit with relatedness at an early stage for the coaching staff. Also, to support autonomy further, the coach said he was working on explaining the purpose of each exercise and training session for the players to a greater extent as he himself felt that was something in need of improvement. The coach also feels the players have matured and have
taken more psycho-social skills to heart now than before the intervention. The players act more confident and treat each other better, both on and off the pitch “you notice that it's not just in handball terms, they become better as people and learn from it and display it in life” as the coach put it.

**Transitional factors.** As it pertains to demands within the club the players set higher demands on themselves than the rest of the environment, especially when it comes to results. The coaches and the manager tend to not set demands and goals as related to achieving certain results but rather for the players to play handball in a certain way. The high demands among players can work positively as a driving force to improve and put the right work in, however it can also spin out of control, make the players break some rules in order to gain results or frustrate the players should the results not go their way. This drive is seen as one of the great resources of the club by the coach and he feels a responsibility to keep that drive at the right level. Another great resource mentioned again is the amount of coaches; however the coach also sees the coaching staff of the club as a possible barrier since there is a number of coaches who lack the right education and competence.

**Discussion**
The discussion will begin discussing the results as it pertains to changes in ESF, demands, barriers and resources, involving empirical research of both transitions and basic needs support. The influences of the transition on basic needs will be discussed continuously under these headings.

**Changes in ESF.** Looking at the results from the SCQ it’s clear that the environment is to be seen as autonomy supportive with generally high scores. The transition has created an environment that supports autonomy, competence and relatedness as described by Adie, Duda and Ntoumanis (2012). The changes made by the manager and his coaching staff have affected the ESF, particularly the organizational culture, creating an increase in autonomy support for the players. If we compare the criteria’s of a needs supportive environment as described by Deci (2014) with the targeted coaches’ behavior one finds similarities. The coaches encourage self-initiation and experimentation, offer relevant choices, calibrate for optimal challenge, and focus on indirect rather than direct competition, as reported from interviews and educational sessions. The players however were reported as tending to focus more on direct competition than the coaches which does not favor a needs supportive environment (Andersson & Dahl, 2015). The coaches manage to minimize the use of controlling language and the environment provides meaningful feedback. What seems to be lacking is giving a rationale for requested behavior and relate from the other’s perspective. The requested behavior as a part of the policy and training documents are not communicated clearly enough and relating from others perspective is as mentioned above the lowest scored question in the SCQ. Adie, Duda & Ntoumanis (2012) also suggest that an autonomy supportive environment alone can satisfy all three needs which could be supported in this case as not all needs seem to be supported fully but yet the players report a high level of basic needs support through the SCQ.

**Demands.** The study confirms that the players feel affected by the increased level of practice and performance. Even though these players still are some steps away from reaching the senior/elite level they notice the toll elite investment has on their lives. Most players in this environment relish the prospect of developing in to senior/elite level players but they admittedly find training less enjoyable than before. As an important part of coping with transition demands in the case of increased practice and performance levels is the social support from coaches (Bruner et. al., 2008). The results show the coaches and players communicate in a manner appreciated by players and that they have a close relationship, making players feel included and most likely has positive effects on relatedness within the club (Reinboth & Duda, 2006). The coaches also try to promote some psycho-social skills
which have shown to be beneficial in a plethora of ways for young athletes (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte & Jones, 2005). These skills, such as always trying your best and “being a good sport” outside of handball can be very beneficial in creating a climate that promotes values and processes helping the players develop and feel autonomous (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte & Jones, 2005; Andersson & Dahl, 2015). One could furthermore argue that balanced lifestyle and developing life skills for the athletes are areas the coaches work with as part of the development of psycho-social skills, which is positive when you look at results of previous studies regarding transitions (Stambulova, Stephan & Jäphag, 2007; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). An argument could be made that by helping develop psycho-social skills for the players, the coaches also increase their feeling of autonomy and competence as a whole. The coaches by working on this notice maturation and some identity development amongst the players, which has shown to be factors contributing to successful transitions (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004; Stambulova, 2012) is positive and should be brought to the coaches’ attention. However no evidence of a consciously planned effort to arrange for social support from coaches where found in the club, most are done through individual efforts. Only in regards of the close relationship and developing of psycho-social skills is the support evident. The result of the SCQ also show that players perceive the coaches understanding of their point of view to be the lowest rated item and the club would be well off if they planned and took preventive actions to facilitate for increased social support through coaches.

The demands of focus and right attitude go hand in hand with doing your utmost which players also spoke of. The coach spoke of how the players set higher demands on themselves than the rest of the environment and the drive the players have. A study on dual careers in Europe showed that the athletes’ main coping strategy was to “give 100%” (Stambulova, Engström, Franck & Linnér, 2012). This mind set is similar to that of the players studied here, further giving these studies validation, and early warnings of burn out and fatigue symptoms should be taken in to close consideration by coaches.

**Barriers.** As put forth by Ryan and Deci (2000) autonomy is not selfishness, independence and getting what one wants but instead that one concur with forces influencing behavior and perceive these forces as valuable helpful and sources of information that support their initiative. Studies have interestingly shown adherence and conforming to other influences common in teams to have positive effects on autonomy where you would think it could affect negatively (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Blanchard, Amio, Perreault & Vallerand, 2009). Players express an understanding on the need to conform and find their influence on the team in general to be sufficient, with reservations on individual differences. But as the goals, motives and drives differ, so will the feeling of autonomy which is affected by the peers of the team (Reinboth & Duda, 2006) and therefore, as the case is here, when the goals and level of play vary between the players they will feel their basic needs satisfaction being influenced when giving and receiving support from each other. The player wanting to push himself, and the team, to the elite level might find the player that participate more for exercise reasons as someone hindering him reaching his goals and aspirations. On the other hand the player more motivated to participate for exercise might find the pushing of the more elite oriented players irritating and cause a loss of enjoyment, maybe even affecting their basic needs as they are forced to conform to the influencing forces not supporting their initiative. Goal pursuit and aspirations have been proven to be very influential on the basic needs satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2002). The players who want to have an elite career are probably likely to feel their autonomy especially affected as they can only affect the team and its result so much without the help of the rest of the team. Also the feeling of competence might be influenced here, when not being able to challenge and prove oneself the need of competence is hard to satisfy (Deci & Ryan, 2000) though players not reporting any problems with this. The other athletes
could very well feel less relatedness to the others, not sharing the same high goals and aspirations. Also competence-wise they are surely going to feel effects and less competent as the others, unless being natural protégés, as the motivation to push oneself further and improve will give those with higher aspirations an edge. This is both difficult to cope with and to explore as it can be sensitive to players involved and cause a rift in the teams relatedness but is however something that the coaches should address further. To further highlight this the score in the questionnaire regarding coaches’ efforts to understand the athletes view were scored the lowest indicating the coaches need to work on this further to fully satisfy the need for relatedness (Adie, Duda & Ntoumanis, 2012) but also to understand the individual differences affecting the players and their potential of successfully adapt to the transitional demands.

The individual roles played by different people in the team will also play in to the individual differences, for instance the team captain will more likely have the ear of the coach than a player that was just moved up to this age group. Thus each individual are likely to have different effects on attitudes, climate, transitional factors and basic needs as well as what is being communicated within studies, something to look out for. The author chose to have the team captain as one of the interviewees because he would likely have more insight to the team than others players and also communicate more with coaches. To complement the team captains view another player was also interviewed and discussions were held during the intervention to gather information from a broader aspect of the team. This is something the author finds important to keep in mind when working with teams in the future.

School and social aspects also play a role on basic needs (Andersson & Dahl, 2015) and the transition (Bruner et. al., 2008). As the tigers work closely with the local schools associated with the Swedish school systems handball classes and most players in the tigers from the age of 16 and older attend these school programs. But not all players will attend these schools and to make it even more complicated, there are different handball schools with different curriculums in the local area. Some players might not be able to share their time between handball and school at this point if not attending a school that facilitates for this. Again differences between individuals will occur and how they are able to, and decide to share their time will affect this. The tigers are a prime example of why the European Union Commissions guidelines for dual career athletes came about. Increased demands both from the school and athletic domain requires closer relationships between schools and clubs in order to accommodate for athletes development without burn outs or drop outs (European Union Commission, 2012). The school system should also help with long-term coping resources as mentioned by the European Union Commission (2012). A lot of responsibility for coping is with that taken from the club and people who know the players well and given to teachers and trainers at the school, communication between the schools and the club must work in order to not create barriers or higher demands. With the Swedish school system there is a possibility for players from all over Sweden to move and be part of the tigers’ organization. These athletes are to a higher extent likely to be affected by transitional demands that normally have been associated with studies on North American student-athletes (Petitpas, Brewer & Van Raalte, 1996). This contains factors as living away from home, managing time etc. These problems have been recognized by the tigers and measures to accommodate for these athletes needs and to swiftly welcome them to the club are in place and continuously developing. The social aspects of pressure and influences from outside handball will also become more evident at this stage in the players lives (Stambulova, 2012; Bruner et. al., 2008). At few other points in the development of athletes will situations arise like this where the players aspirations differ to this extent (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) and at around this point a choice will most have to be made on whether or not to specialize and keep playing with a team at this level, for most athletes (Moesch, Elbe, Hauge & Wikman,
Most likely players that have set their mind on reaching further in sports will continue their path on elite investment whereas the others might be easier to persuade to focus on other things. The coach mentioned players taking their handballing very serious and not letting other things affect them, and the demand of focus is also intended to keep the players on track. The author also find it intriguing that the club clearly has become more focused on developing elite level players and making investments into this, yet still aim at being inclusive and letting anyone that wants to participate. This is of course good in the aspect of keeping the width of participants but is sure to cause problems because the club can’t facilitate for both width and peak performance at the same time. The author would like to think that the idea behind this is something rooted in the Swedish athletic culture and history.

In this case parents are very opinionated and have expressed concern on whether the club is managed right or not. This is likely to affect the players in the transition, increasing stress levels as the athletes are influenced by the views of parents and significant others (Bruner et. al., 2008). In turn this also impact the players basic needs satisfaction as parents also have been found to affect athletes perceived autonomy support (Gagne, 2003; Keegan, Harwood, Spray & Lavallee, 2008). Players at this age are to a large extent still dependent on the parents and discussions and influences are shared with them not only when in the handball context. The manager and coaching staff have acknowledged the need to communicate more with parents, meeting and reasoning with them which from a holistic perspective is wise as they are important for the players, club and play part in the environment (Wylleman & Reints, 2010; Henriksen, 2010; Andersson & Dahl, 2015). If the manager and coaching staff would have ignored this barrier, they would run a clear risk at not being able to cope with it.

Resources. The coaches and their work must be considered the main resource of the club when dealing with transitional demands. They promote an autonomy supportive environment as described numerous times above, which in turn also promotes the other basic needs in the environment (Adie, Duda & Ntoumanis, 2012; Deci, 2014). Their drive and engagement showed by coaches also make them perfect role models in their work to elicit psychosocial skills in the players and the right attitudes. Their work with “the bubble” is also important to create policies and an atmosphere that players enjoy, feel safe in and is open for all impressions and thoughts. When “stepping in to the bubble” the coaches also creates a climate promoting focus by the players.

The togetherness reported between players as well as players and coaches effect the relatedness positively as mentioned earlier. Coaches in the tigers’ organization have despite this found ways to improve by recently taking further steps to form friendships and establish a group identity for furthering basic needs satisfaction. Earlier and more effective approaches are now used, as evident from the follow-up interviews, that facilitates the need of relatedness and the players have felt a difference already. This works in line with the idea of coaches facilitating friendship and affiliations among peers (Keegan, Harwood, Spray & Lavallee, 2008). As argued above, peers and significant others influence the players also in transitions and are important to consider when working in an environment undergoing transitions (Bruner et. al., 2008; Stambulova, 2012). Also argued above are relatedness and a close relationship coaches and players as that could offer social support (Reinboth & Duda, 2006; Bruner et. al., 2008; Stambulova, 2012).

The tigers and sharks have together created a way to make jobs available within the club after a players career is terminated, supported by earlier studies as something helping with transitions especially career termination (Torregrosa, Boixadós, Valiente, & Cruz, 2004; Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler & Côté, 2009). The best example is the manager that after termination from his playing career with the sharks is employed full time with the tigers. Also most coaches within the tigers’ organization are former players that for one reason or the other have been given the chance to educate themselves, coach and develop those skills,
although not all are employed and paid a full time salary. However the opportunity is there and there are “role models” to show future players the club has that resource in the long term. The coaches are reported as role models in more ways, and other proximal role models are also close on hand to inspire players which is positive (Henriksen, 2010; Andersson & Dahl, 2015). As mentioned a lot of the players in the team studied have a mind set to become elite level players and/or professionals abroad. This could work as a barrier for them if they keep having a strong athletic identity and are not willing to let go of that dream (Grove, Lavallee & Gordon, 1997; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). One could argue that this also creates a form of autonomy support for members of the club, as opportunities are given to create alternative career choices rather than just being a player. To have been a coach can also act as a merit in the future if the individual decides to step out of sports.

Findings in Schinke et. al.’s (2006) study are noticeably similar to many findings within this study despite the two cultures and sports where the studies are conducted to be different. Schinke et. al. (2006) found two categories of adaptation adopted by athletes when transitioning in to elite sport: “self-adaptation” and “adapted environment”. Under self-adaptation they found five subcategories. One is making the commitment; this can be closely related to the coach describing the drive most players have, the willingness to train and give it all. Learning the structure is another one, this has been stressed by the author in the intervention. The fact that players barely know who’s on the board or the motto of the club it’s even more evidence that it could help with coping if they had more insight. Self-managing is another that these athletes share, where players can and are encouraged by coaches to make the effort they want and that suits them in order to obtain their goals, for those wanting to become elite level players it could entail increasing the amount of practice and choosing a school with handball classes for instance. To gain acceptance and connect with peers is also touched on and something addressed many times in this study. In regards to adapted environment, the two subcategories are teammate support and building relationships, this has been argued many times as relatedness in this study. The adaptations described could thus be highlighted to instill in the targeted players and to use in their future endeavors as they should be able to recognize and utilize them even though they are not described as adaptive measures in this study.

The ACTM states that a balance between demands, barriers and resources need to be obtained in order to cope with a transition without any backlash (Stambulova, 2003). As the author now finds the club the balance between the demands, barriers and resources are a bit off. Mainly because the coaches and manager (and their ideas) more or less stand alone as the resources, whereas barriers exist within and without the club, influencing players from a number of directions. The author finds the possible influences of the barriers, mainly regarding how the environment is to cope with the differences in individual goals and aspirations as a worry. The team is in the process of obtaining new goals together, the author recommended in the intervention for players to create individual goals to later on use to influence the team and possibly club goals, which should be created together for the best effect.

In summary the clubs transition with the arrival of the new manager seems to have had a positive effect on basic needs support. Since the new ideas and influences brought in by the manager concern predominantly autonomy support but the other needs as well it has developed for the better. However some things influence the basic needs negatively, most of which can be seen as vestiges of the board which work in the same manner with similar ideas and reasoning as before the transition.

**Contributions to existing theories and models**

In regards to SDT the results found in this study doesn’t add a new dimension, the study only finds more evidence to validate the theory regarding the importance of basic needs

This study shows that the ACTM (Stambulova, 2003) can be used in regards to teams or clubs and not just individuals. What differs is that one need to gather and take in regards all the players’ views on demands, resources and barriers. The divergent ideas and perceptions of everyone within the environment however make this harder. All perceptions, influences etc. cannot be taken in to consideration but only the most common that can represent the entire team or club. Therefore, to use the ACTM on a group, measures like interviewing multiple persons and gathering information from the entire group will have to be taken, which was done in this study.

Central for creating the club’s attitude and environment is the organizational culture (Henriksen, 2010). This shows a possible tie between the ESF model, especially the organizational culture, and the ACTM in regards to studying teams’ transitions. The components of the culture will most definitely impact the athletes view on how transitions are handled and dealt with. As has been pointed out regarding differences between cultures, adaptations to facilitate for the specific culture should be made for the transition to be successful (Stambulova, Stephan & Jäphag, 2007; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). On this basis the same could be argued for individual differences within one club and its culture. The organizational culture will affect the individual actions beliefs and views etc. (Schein, 1984; 1985). To be aware of the central aspects of the culture could therefore hold answers on how to meet the group and how to make them work towards facilitating the transition. The culture can also contain keys to the demands; barriers and resources which have been the case in this study, for instance most of the basic assumptions and espoused values can be found in the results of the interviews and educational sessions.

**Method reflection**

As the study began to take shape in the beginning of the year the team studied advanced in the national championships which created a situation where the author weren’t allowed time with the participants by coaches. This is natural as the team was at the end of its season, where an intervention might not have had a positive effect on the team but instead acts as a road block and creates a negative atmosphere for the entire study. Instead parts of the study had to be put on hold until the pre-season started which in general is the ideal time for interventions (Weinberg & Gould, 2014). This in turn also created a situation where the time span between the first meeting and gathering of data for the SCQ were separated quite some time from the intervention and interviews which isn’t optimal. The time spent with the team on beforehand has however proved itself useful in this case as the athletes and coaches all know about the efforts made by the author and the study. They also see the author as a familiar face and the process of getting acquainted with the environment and its unique features and functions were not needed. The team and coaches were very positive towards having a study being conducted within its setting and tried as much as possible to accommodate the requests of the author. Another aspect of the time that could have had an impact on the results is the limited amount of time between the intervention and the follow-up interviews. In two weeks it’s hard for the coaches to create any lasting changes or for players to change their mindset even if they have been educated and given tips and tools. In this case there was no other alternative in order to be able to complete the study in time, instead the expectations on the impact of the intervention had to be lowered and instead extra emphasis has been put on developing the implications in this study that are to be seen as an extension of the tips handed out to the coaches.

The initial effort of the study was to conduct a different type of intervention and use a somewhat different approach than the one presented here. The very positive results of the SCQ rendered that type of study useless and it had to be taken in a different direction. In a
discussion with his supervisor the author then took a new direction, still keeping the results from the SCQ as they can be interesting for the present study. One can debate whether or not to include them in this study as the results from the SCQ were originally intended for other purposes and generally very positive. The fact is that some players gave exceptionally low scores on some of the questions which indicate a big diversity within the team, and to have a quantitative aspect included in this study could be useful since the study of transitions can be complex with many aspects to take in to consideration (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014). One might also argue that the numeral of 23 is quite low in order to conduct a questionnaire that is to be considered valid. Since the questionnaire were comprised of all players of the team the author couldn’t find reason to have any others answer the questionnaire but instead used interviews as a way to find nuances and more in depth information.

The earlier study conducted by Andersson and Dahl (2015) gave a pointer as to what type of climate the targeted environment was. With the fact that the tigers’ environment was reported as an autonomy supportive environment one could argue that using SDT and the SCQ might be unnecessary and other measures could have been used. For the tigers the interesting thing to find is however measures of improvement in an environment undergoing change. They find the environment to function sufficiently though striving to become even more successful. By this means a new study with a more detailed view on all constituents regarding basic needs satisfaction with the players’ views and focusing on the transitions influence on basic needs seemed like the right fit for the author.

A lot of research has been done regarding the athletic transitions and how to facilitate for a good transition, even more so in social psychology which is the base of transitions. However most of those studies and theories have a focus and starting point in individual sports and efforts to facilitate transitions. No theory about transition was a perfect match for this intended study of an entire club, however after some discussions with his supervisor; the author chose to use the ACTM as this doesn’t specifically limit the work to individual athletes. The author was also familiar with the theory from earlier work.

Neither was any significant studies found regarding handball, transitions and basic needs. Most significantly was the motivational climate and sportpersonship studied (e.g. Balaguer, Duda, Atienza, & Mayo, 2002; Stornes, 2001; Stornes & Ommundsen, 2004)

Lastly educational sessions were held both before and after training sessions, the ideal time point can be debated but both has it’s upside. In case of doing it before training nothing else is distracting the participants but on the other hand they are anxiously waiting to start the training session and might have their mind elsewhere. In the case of doing it after the session, the participants are not affected on looking forward to starting the training but might be fatigued and instead look forward to get home and have other places to be etc. The author found that having the session held before training seemed to have had more effect and garnered more attention from the participants. The one time the educational session were held after training there was no alternative given, either the session were held after that training session or a week later which would’ve put the study back another week.

**Implications**

First and foremost the importance of the manager cannot be understated as the players and coaches time and again mention his work as influential and talk about his popularity. They also recognize that he is the one instigating the transition since arriving to the club in 2013 so to keep him in the organization is key to not create another transitional effect that might spiral in to a crisis situation (Stambulova, 2003). With consistency a strong organizational culture that creates coordination and control is likely to arise that also reduces conflict and uncertainty (Shilbury & Hooper, 1999). That has been factors affecting the environments transition now with the internal animosity between the two club boards. Also as a longitudinal research has shown, to switch coaches and staff is most likely only a solution in
the short term and not a successful strategy if you want long-term success (Salman, Arnesson & Shukur, 2009). That study showed in particular that you should never get rid of a coach that is perceived as capable and qualified which would be the case here. However, as the manager also doubles as a coach in the team studied he is perceived as having issues managing his time between all his commitments within the club. The author would recommend for the manager to take a step back from coaching the one team and instead create a better overview of all teams within the tigers’ organization and manage more of the administration and development of players, coaches and the club alike. As to not lose contact with coaches and players, and for them to benefit from his knowledge, he might be able to help out on occasional training sessions amongst all the different teams within the organization. By doing so he shouldn’t end up getting stuck in his deeper commitment to the one team and lose his perception of the entire club which is a likely outcome as it is organized at this time.

Communication issues as were addressed by Andersson and Dahl (2015) still exist in the environment and must be addressed in order to achieve an increased level of basic needs support. Since well functioning communication is important to human beings as social organisms (Deci & Ryan, 2000) which is especially visible in team sports (Sullivan, Jowett & Rhind, 2014), well-functioning communication can help players contribute to basic needs support. For instance with relatedness and both giving and receiving support (Ryan & Deci, 2002). It also helps coaches promote basic needs support regarding all three basic needs when the communication is clear and misinterpretations are kept to a minimum (Adie, Duda & Ntoumanis, 2012). The communication should start from the top with the board and leaders of the tigers being more visible for the players and communicating its mottos and policy documents better. To give the teams and coaches of the tigers the right preconditions to function and communicate takes planning and coordination (Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004) which in all sense and purpose is the responsibility of the board and staff of any club. In this case most players don’t know the mottos or detailed information in the policy documents; most players don’t even know who is on the board of the club. If the boards work and objectives are communicated clearer and are made more visible the red thread they try to create all through the organization will be clear, evident and easier to communicate for coaches.

On the same theme is the question of communication between the tigers and the sharks where concern has been voiced especially by coaches. On the same basis as mentioned above this needs to be addressed and if the partnership is to work in the long term things need to be resolved between the two club boards. The coaches and the manager are the ones that need to push this idea and with the study by Eccles & Tenenbaum (2004) as a base the tigers would most likely be able to develop a framework of coordination and communication that would work. Otherwise the general idea from the coach participating in this study is that a change of personnel in those positions have to be made in order for well functioning communication to become reality in the environment.

Something not reported that could further the feeling of autonomy support would be for the coaches to involve the players in their own evaluation process (Reinboth & Duda, 2006). Instead of only having influence on training regimes and play, if allowed to evaluate themselves players can further their own development and mature whilst at the same time feel more autonomous.

As addressed in the follow up interview as something the coach had reflected upon, the author would like to suggest to the coaches to even further explain and make the purpose of each training session more evident to the players. This is recommended to create a big picture to the players, despite them reporting a high level of understanding the trainings. The explanation of purpose acts autonomy supportive for the players as they start to reflect on the need of each exercise and when the skills learned in the exercise can be used in actual game
play (Ntoumanis & Mallett, 2014). Also useful and discussed with the coaches are the possibilities of having several exercises to choose between that allow the players to train the same types of skills. This would give the coaches a better possibility to offer choices to the players during training sessions which also acts autonomy supportive (Ntoumanis & Mallett, 2014). This is something the coaches have begun working on and is hereby encouraged further by the author.

Lastly but maybe most importantly, a 5 step career planning (Stambulova, 2010) is recommended to be conducted. This could help both on individual levels as well as for the team and entire club, again when working with a team additional consideration has to be taken. As described earlier it helps with structuring and organizing of the past, present and future, but also ranking priorities so that you have a plan in order to reduce stress regarding transitions. To structure ones future also can promote ones basic needs as you deal in aspirations and goal settings which as mentioned clearly affects basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Naturally this might not be something the coaches have the time or competence for which again lifts an argument for the hiring of a sport psychology consultant within the club which Andersson and Dahl (2015) already pointed out in their previous study. This could also help coaches gain a better view on the individual differences noted in the team.

**Future research**

Also mentioned in the contributions to existing theories, the author finds links between the ESF, especially the organizational culture, and the ACTM. This would also be interesting to study further and more in depth as it could further develop the holistic ecological approach and its use. A sub theory for transition within the holistic ecological approach might be able to develop. Further research might also suggest that the right organizational culture might promote the correct variables for the transitional process to function better and vice versa. For instance the organizational culture might be at fault for some of the barriers and therefore contribute negatively to the transition.

To conduct a further in-depth study regarding this environment would also be interesting, trying to facilitate for the implications given and conducting a long-term intervention that can help the club settle after its transition.

**Conclusion**

The team perceives its transition as being more or less completed and the attitude of pushing past barriers in order to continue developing young athletes underline this. However unresolved issues still exist and needs to be addressed to complete the transition started two years ago. Demands on players consist of making elite investments but they also set higher demands on themselves, focusing on gaining results. The wide difference in goals and aspirations between players act as a barrier but so is the communication issues that needs to be addressed. The coaches and their way of interacting with players are found to be the main resource within this club; this also lays a foundation for the resource of a strong feeling of relatedness.

The clubs transition has affected basic needs in a plethora of ways. Most notably autonomy support has improved since the new manager arrived. His importance for the club and the completion of the transition cannot be stressed enough. The elite investment also affects all basic needs and the change there is evident for the players. The coaches’ relationship and non-controlling communication with the players also affect the competence positively and would not have come about without the transition. The club gained a manager with experience in training and his vast network of other experts to help mold the athletes. Also individualized training has been implemented to further satisfy the need for competence and there are many coaches on hand to help. Lastly as reported the team and coaches feel a strong relatedness but the entire club and the parents does not. The communication issues mentioned acts as a negative on all basic needs also parents are not included fully and the
barrier where some parents doubt the work of the manager affect the relatedness in the club negatively. Also the difference in goal and aspirations of players also affects the autonomy. The short term intervention showed to have had some impact on the coaches’ actions and ways of thinking. Very little to no effect had been accomplished on players. However if the club were to continue working with the tips from the intervention and the implications given here, there is likely a positive outcome from the transition, the first step though is to acknowledge within the club that the transition is not fully completed and accept that measures need to be taken in order for it to come full circle.
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References


Informationsbrev och förfrågan till manager angående medverkan i en studie gällande idrottares upplevelser av stöd och motivation.

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Hej!

Du tillfrågas härmed att delta i en underökning där målet är att få mer kunskap om idrottarens upplevelser av stöd från sin miljö. Detta görs för att få en bättre förståelse för hur detta upplevs påverka motivation.

Deltagande i undersökningen är frivilligt. Informationen som samlas in kommer behandlas konfidentiellt vilket innebär att varje intervju och enkät kommer nummerkodas och att ingen utomstående kommer att kunna se vem som sagt eller svarat vad när studien redovisas. Du har rätt att dra dig ur studien när som helst utan att behöva ange varför.

Kontaktperson

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Telefon: 0766-492957

Handledare:

Professor Natalia Stambulova

Informerat samtycke och bekräftelse att:

- Jag har blivit informerad om studiens syfte.
- Jag har blivit informerad om hur mina svar kommer behandlas.
- Jag har blivit informerad om att jag kan dra mig ur studien när som helst.

Jag är villig att delta i denna studie för att undersöka idrottarens upplevelse av stöd från sin miljö.

Namnteckning: ________________________________
Namnförtydligande: ________________________________
Datum: ________________________________
The Sports Climate Questionnaire (SCQ)

Det här frågeformuläret behandlar de erfarenheter du har med din tränare. Tränare har olika sätt att arbeta med spelare och det är intressant att veta mer om dina erfarenheter. Dina svar behandlas konfidentiellt så vänligen svara spontant, ärligt och uppriktigt.

1. Jag upplever att min tränare ger mig val och möjligheter.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med

2. Jag upplever att min tränare förstår mig.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med

3. Jag kan tala öppet och fritt med min tränare på träningarna
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med

4. Min tränare visar förtroende för min förmåga att prestera väl.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med

5. Jag upplever att min tränare accepterar mig.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med

6. Min tränare ser till att jag verkligen förstår målet med träningen och vad som krävs av mig.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med

7. Min tränare uppmuntrar mig att ställa frågor.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med

8. Jag känner stort förtroende för min tränare
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   håller absolut inte med  varken eller  håller helt och hålet med
9. Min tränare svarar noggrant och genomtänkt på mina frågor.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
håller absolut varken håller helt inte med eller och hållet med
inte med

10. Min tränare lyssnar på mina förslag.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
håller absolut varken håller helt inte med eller och hållet med
inte med

11. Min tränare handskas bra med andras känslor

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
håller absolut varken håller helt inte med eller och hållet med
inte med

12. Jag upplever att min tränare bryr sig om mig som person

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
håller absolut varken håller helt inte med eller och hållet med
inte med


   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
håller absolut varken håller helt inte med eller och hållet med
inte med


   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
håller absolut varken håller helt inte med eller och hållet med
inte med

15. Jag upplever att jag kan berätta för min tränare hur jag känner mig.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
håller absolut varken håller helt inte med eller och hållet med
inte med
Narrativ intervju

Undersökningsfråga: Hur påverkas spelarna av klubbens förändring?

Studien avhandlar en förening som genomgår en förändring och dess förmåga att ge stöd.

Deltagande är frivilligt. Informationen som samlas in kommer behandlas konfidentiellt.

Ingen utomstående kommer att kunna se vem som sagt eller svarat vad när studien redovisas.

Du har rätt att dra dig ur studien när som helst utan att behöva ange varför.

Får jag spela in intervjun?

Ålder?

Aktiv hur länge?

Långsiktigt mål med handbollen?

Vad är det bästa med ditt lag/din förening? Ge exempel

Vad är mindre bra? Ge exempel

Känner du att du utvecklas bra i laget/föreningen? Varför/varför inte? Ge exempel

Skulle du vilja att klubben ändrade/utvecklade något? Ge exempel

Hur påverkas din känsla av självbestämmande av laget/föreningen?

**Autonomi** är behovet av att vara självbestämmande i sina val och handlingar, där en aktivitet utförs för att det känns naturligt och **frivilligt**. Det är **egenriktning**, självbestämmande **utan att vara helt oberoende** från påverkan från den sociala miljö du befinner dig i. Du som individ **skall instämma** med de krafter (tex tränare, vänner, andra spelare) som påverkar ditt beteende, antingen uppfattar du dig som styrd av dem (vilket är negativt för autonomin) eller så uppfattar du dessa som hjälpfulla, värdefulla och överensstämmande källor till **information som stödjer dina initiativ**.

Hur påverkas din känsla av kompetens av laget/föreningen?

**Kompetens** tillgodoses genom att individen får möjligheten att **bevisa samt utmana sin kapacitet**. Idrottaren utmanas ständig på en nivå som **varken är för lätt eller för svår**.

Hur påverkas din känsla av samhörighet av laget/föreningen?

**Samhörighet** är behovet av **gemenskap**, där möjlighet att både **ge och få stöd av andra** ges.
Narrativ intervju

Undersökningsfråga: Hur påverkar klubbens förändring för tränarna?

Studien avhandlar en förening som genomgår en förändring och dess förmåga att ge stöd.

Deltagande är frivilligt. Informationen som samlas in kommer behandlas konfidentiellt.

Ingen utomstående kommer att kunna se vem som sagt eller svarat vad när studien redovisas.

Du har rätt att dra dig ur studien när som helst utan att behöva ange varför.

Får jag spela in intervjun?

Bakgrundsfrågor:

Ålder?

Aktiv hur länge?

Långsiktigt mål med handbollstränandet?

Vad är det bästa med ditt lag/din förening? Ge exempel

Vad är mindre bra? Ge exempel

Känner du att du utvecklas bra i laget/föreningen? Varför/varför inte? Ge exempel

Skulle du vilja att klubben ändrade/utvecklade något? Ge exempel

Hur påverkar du som tränare känslan av autonomi?

**Autonomi** är behovet av att vara självbestämmande i sina val och handlingar, där en aktivitet utförs för att det känns naturligt och frivilligt. Det är **egenriktning**, självbestämmande **utan att vara helt oberoende** från påverkan från den sociala miljö du befinner dig i. Du som individ **skall instämma** med de krafter (tex tränare, vänner, andra spelare) som påverkar ditt beteende, antingen uppfattar du dig som styrdd av dem (vilket är negativt för autonomin) eller så uppfattar du dessa som hjälpfulla, värdefulla och överensstämmande källor till information som stödjer dina initiativ.

Hur påverkar du som tränare känslan av kompetens?

**Kompetens** tillgodoses genom att individen får möjligheten att **bevisa samt utmana sin kapacitet**. Idrottaren utmanas ständigt på en nivå som **varken är för lätt eller för svår**.

Hur påverkar du som tränare känslan av samhörighet?

**Samhörighet** är behovet av **gemenskap**, där möjlighet att både **ge och få stöd av andra** ges.
Narrativ uppföljningsintervju

Undersökningsfråga: Har spelarna tagit till sig av interventionen?

Använder du/tänker du på de utdelade tipsen? I så fall hur?

Har du reflekterat mer kring krav/hinder/resurser? Vad har du reflekterat kring? Har det skett någon förändring?

Har du reflekterat mer kring de grundläggande psykologiska behoven? Vad har du reflekterat kring? Har det skett någon förändring?

Har tränare/ledare förändrat något på träningar eller i sitt agerande? Vad/hur?
Narrativ uppföljningsintervju

Undersökningsfråga: Har tränarna tagit till sig av interventionen?

Använder du/tänker du på de utdelade tipsen? I så fall hur?

Har du reflekterat mer kring krav/hinder/resurser? Vad har du reflekterat kring? Har det skett någon förändring?

Har du reflekterat mer kring de grundläggande psykologiska behoven? Vad har du reflekterat kring? Har det skett någon förändring?

Har spelarna förändrat något på träningar eller i sitt agerande? Vad/hur?
Tips för spelare

- Målsättning
  - Individuellt, lag OCH klubb

- Self-awareness
  - Vad känner jag? När känner jag?
  - Hur reagerar jag?

- Var aktiva!
  - Leta information
  - Kom med förslag och idéer
  - Ge varandra feedback - hamburgarmodellen
  - Ge stöd, inom och utom handbollen
  - Empowering av mer information och kontroll
  - Sök upp och använd de resurser som finns
Tips för tränare

1. Målsättning
   a. Specifika, mätbara, anpassade, relevanta, tidsbestämda, självpåverkade
   b. Lång och kort sikt, delmål

2. Låta spelarna välja uppvärmning själv

3. Låt spelarna rösta om vilka övningar de gillar mest/helst vill göra

4. Uppmuntra spelarna att ställa frågor kring träningar och övningar

5. Feedback – hamburgarmodellen:
   a. Närn vad spelaren/na gör bra
   b. Närn vad du vill att de/n ska förändra
   c. Avsluta med att säga något positivt/uppmuntrande

6. Kommunikation inom klubben
   a. Förbättra och utöka samarbetet med övriga tränare
   b. Få styrelsen/ledningen att visa sig mer för spelarna
   c. Policydokument och värdeorden bör cementeras hos spelarna

7. Effektiv kommunikation
   a. Vilket budskap är jag ute efter? Self-awareness!
   c. Var ska meddelandet kommuniceras? Offentligt, inför laget, slutet möte, under träning, under match
   d. Vem är mottagaren? Skräddarsy ditt meddelande och hur det leveras efter vem som ska motta det, detta kännetecknar en effektiv coach och dennes sätt att kommunicera.
   e. Har meddelandet mottagits korrekt? Be mottagaren återberätta med egna ord vad budskapet var, endast fråga om denne förstått lämnar utrymme för misstolkningar
Mattias Dahl föddes 1987 i Landskrona. Han har tidigare studerat idrottsvetenskapligt program vid högskolan i Halmstad. Detta är hans tredje uppsats om talangutveckling och grundläggande psykologiska behov.