



## Ranking of the education and social benefits, the responsibilities, the professional competencies of sport counseling process in the opinion of sports and physical education experts

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of this study was assessing and ranking in terms of practical importance of the responsibilities and professional skills of sports counselor included in the specific occupational standard, in the vision of sports professors and coaches; identifying the level of correlation between responsibilities and professional skills of sports counselor.

**Methods:** The research included 471 specialists in physical education and sports training the professional competencies and responsibility questionnaire of the sports counselor was applied (qrpcsc) and divided in 2 scales: scale 1: Responsibilities of the sports counselor and scale 2 professional competencies of sports counselor, assessed by participant using SPSS and the Likert scale.

**Results:** Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire QRCPCSC of the scale 1 Sports counselor responsibilities questionnaire was  $\alpha = .947$ , and for scale 2 Professional competencies of sports counselor was  $\alpha = .963$ , all value suggesting that the items had high internal consistency. It is guiding sportspeople in solving the professional problems which they have in different moments of their career and giving sports advice for the professional problems.

**Conclusion:** Career and practical development in sports counseling is based on the impact which responsibilities and professional competency of sports counselors are reflected in the vision of experts with major influence on student's mentality, sports recreational and physical education experts.

### Keywords

Sports counselor,  
Occupational standard,  
Physical education and sport,  
Professionalism in sports

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of sports counseling process fits in the actual trends, by the diversify of new professions, imposed by the evolution of sports phenomenon (Badau, 2014). Sports counseling is focusing on the growth of the athlete as an individual, including the interpersonal problems related to performance, training and also professional sports career (Hinkle, 1999; Vasiliu, & Ciolca, 2014). Counseling targets the effectiveness of sports management performance, of time and style of life that the athlete has and solving the problematic situations specific to the sports career (Harris, 2015; Shurts, & Shoffner, 2004).

The process of sports counseling targets the direct interventions on athlete's life, highlights the role of sport in human development, collaboration and communication efficiency with the athletes by the point of view of performance and athletes career (Petitpas, & Tinsley, 2014). In the point view of experts, the sport counselor is a qualified person that based on specialty knowledge and specific abilities and competences offers assistance to some persons or groups involved in sport and recreational activities, with the view to improve the fitness and optimize the sport career (Hilliard, Redmond, & Watson, 2019; Lindo et. Al., 2019).

In present, the values, social norms, thinking patterns and styles of life of the practicants of sports and recreational activities are constantly changing, so also the process of counseling suffers major modifications which impose knowledge expansion with practical abilities of the counselors in relation with present tendencies and individual and group requirements (Lowery, 2019; Tao, & Wei, 2011). The achievement of these goals reclaim from counselor's point of view a good capacity of: understanding,

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improvement, structuring of knowledge, communication, learning, adaptability, creativity, etc. (Wu, 2011; Tod, 2007).

The process of sports counseling associated with psychological process and health promotion activities (Rus, et. al. 2019; Badau, Prebeg, Mitic, & Adela, 2015), can contribute to the optimization of life quality (Camarda, & Badau, 2010; Badau, Ungur, & Badau, 2015) and also to the effectiveness of different activities and the career of physical education practicants (Talaghir, Iconomescu, Stoica, 2018; Drevel, Stoica, Blejan, & Ene, 2019; Badau, & Badau, 2018; Corlaci, Hidi, Vasilescu, & Stoica, 2013). The essential condition is that this process of counseling to be accomplished by experts with a high professional and educational level.

The study consists in highlighting the impact which responsibilities and specific components of the process of sports counseling has in the opinion of experts from pre-university and university educational system and sports coaches. Specialty literature highlights the insufficient information regarding the importance of responsibilities and specific competencies, performed by sports counselors for the efficiency of their activity and the important role this profession has in physical education. We consider that structuring responsibilities and specific competencies will determine the awareness by sports counselors of the image that this activity has in the vision of experts from physical education field. Elaboration of occupational standard (Badau, Larion, & Petre, 2014), didn't have a base for scientific research regarding competencies and responsibilities of sports counselor, but it was based only on the necessity of including these professions in relation with the dynamic working market in recreational physical educational field. The arguments which were anteriorly mentioned were at the base of achieving this study, which we hope it will highlight on scientific data the area of responsibility and competency of sports counselor. Actual and modern tendencies regarding competency expansion and also the level of professional specialists from the physical education field targets to be more dynamic and create new professional and occupational opportunities imposed by social and economic dynamic evolution and especial of the sport phenomenon.

Our study targeted three specific aims:

- Evaluation and ranking by the point of view of practical importance of responsibilities of sports counselor included in specific occupational standard in the vision of sports professors and coaches;
- Professional competency impact evaluation of sports counselor specific for occupational standard and their ranking by the point of view of practical importance, in the expert's vision from physical education field;
- Identifying the correlation level between specific responsibilities and professional competencies of sports counselor in the context of new occupation in sports field.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The research was conducted between April - October 2019 and it included 471 specialists in physical education and sports training who were kind to answer the questionnaire. The inclusion criteria targeted active specialists with superior studies which were finished. The excluding criteria were if they not completed all items of questionnaires. Questionnaires were individually administered and were completed online. The questionnaire was created with Google Forms, being collected and processed only the completed dates for whole questionnaire. Participation in the study was voluntary and progress of the study was in compliance with the study which follows the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and their amendment.

### **Participants**

Specialists from Romania, from which 357 (75.8%) physical education professors from pre-university and university and 112 (24.2%) active sport coaches. All participants at the study are active experts with a seniority in educational and sports system for at least 2 years, age between 23-56, 269 (57.2%) male and 202 (42.8%) female.

### **Measures**

In the study we use the questionnaire for assessing the professional responsibilities and competences of the sports counselor (QRCPSC), divided in 2 scales: scale 1 responsibilities of sports counselor and scale 2 professional competencies of sports counselor. Responsibilities and competencies were

identified by occupational standard approved in 2012 by National Authority for Qualifications, from Romania, base group 2269 COR code 226911 (Badau, Larion, & Petre, 2014).

Scale 1 Responsibilities of sports counselor include 10 items which targeted the main responsibilities and roles of sports counselor. Scale 2 professional competencies of sports counselor includes 7 items which correspond to the main activities and competencies that derive from them, specific to the sports counselor involved in sports, recreational and institutional activity. The questionnaire was designed with Likert scale (5), 1 representing the minimum level of evaluation of practice impact, and 5 the highest level of appreciation of practice impact.

### Statistical analysis

The data were processed by using IBM-SPSS 24, and the statistical analysis included the index: the arithmetic average (X), standard deviation (SD), Student- t test (t), Corrected Item-Total Correlation (r), Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The value of statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Pearson Inter-Item Correlation Matrix index had been choosing to highlight the correlation between the items of each scale of QRCPCSC. Interpretation of Pearson correlation as (Evans, 1996), suggests for the absolute value of r: .00-.19 very weak, .20-.39 weak .40-.59 moderate .60-.79 strong .80-1.0 very strong. The reliability or the internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha statistical index ( $\alpha$ ). For internal consistency, Cronbach's coefficient alpha to test reliability exceeded 0.70 for all measures. Descriptive statistics (mean  $\pm$  SD) was calculated for all variables of study.

## RESULTS

Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire QRCPCSC of the scale 1 responsibilities of sports counselor questionnaire was  $\alpha = .947$ , and for scale 2 professional competencies of sports counselor was  $\alpha = .963$ , all value suggesting that the items had high internal consistency. Also all values of Cronbach's Alpha for each item highlights a high internal consistence,  $\alpha$  values being contained between .939 si .960 (Table 1). Statistical processing of the results of the questionnaire QRCPCSC for both scales and for the study sample highlighted the results statistically significant for  $p < 0.05$ . the results recorded by the Corrected Item-Total Correlation index reflect a strong and very strong, the lowest values being .693, and the highest .888 (Table 1). According Table 1, the average value of the whole questionnaire was 3.897; for the scale 1 Sports counselor responsibilities questionnaire for the average value was  $x = 3.835$ , and for scale 2 professional competencies of sports counselor was  $x = 3.985$ . The highest score on scale 1 The responsibilities of the sports counselor was registered for item 3. It orients the athletes in solving the professional problems they face at different times of their career  $x = 4.066$ , and the lowest average score of item 8 Assisting the athletes during the negotiations  $x = 3,560$ . The highest score on scale 2 The professional competencies of the sports counselor was registered for item 3 Granting of consultancy to the athletes on professional issues  $x = 4.173$ , and the lowest average score for item 4 Monitoring the sports preparation process  $x = 3.830$

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for the results of the questionnaire QRCPCSC assessing the responsibilities' and professional competences of sport counselor

Scale	Items	x	SD	t	p	r
	Item 1. Collects, selects information and informs athletes about the evolution of the sports field.	3.857	1.01383	189.000	0.788	
	Item 2. Identifies the professional problems of athletes with an impact on sports performance and working relationships and looks for ways to solve them.	3.853	1.11375	643.000	0.751	
1. Responsibilities of sports counselor	Item 3. It guides the athletes in solving the professional problems that they face at different moments of their career	4.066	1.00288	651.000	0.843	
	Item 4. It guides the athletes in solving the professional problems that they face at different moments of their career.	3.887	1.02582	848.000	0.826	
	Item 5. It proposes alternative solutions and facilitates the choice by the athlete of the optimal variant of action in correlation with his own interests and professional objectives.	3.811	.976	85.322	0.804	

	Item 6. It manages the athletes's relations with the sports structures and with the environment of promoting the athletes's personal brand.	3.7441.10574.065.000.790
	Item 7. It provides the connections between the different sports structures and the athletes.	3.7211.06376.476.000.756
	Item 8. Assists the athletes during the negotiations.	3.5601.17066.497.000.693
	Item 9. Advises the athletes in case of conflict situations.	4.0001.08580.568.000.755
	Item 10. Orientates and monitors subjects in independent physical activity in order to improve the health and quality of life.	3.8531.05779.646.000.803
2. Professional competencies of sports counselor	Item 1. Informing the athletes about the evolution of the sports field.	3.8841.01084.089.000.879
	Item 2. Counseling athletes to negotiate contracts.	3.9681.05881.965.000.861
	Item 3. Providing counseling to athletes on professional issues.	4.1731.02888.720.000.888
	Item 4. Monitoring the sports training process.	3.8301.11874.842.000.813
	Item 5. Representation of athletes in relation to sports structures.	4.023 .982 89.494.000.862
	Item 6. Facilitating the solving of conflicts in sports relationships.	4.0331.08381.427.000.883
	Item 7. Orientation of clients in motor activity.	3.989 .967 90.109.000.881

x- mean arithmetic; SD - standard deviation; p - level of probability, t- Student's test value, r - Corrected Item-Total Correlation,  $\alpha$  - Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted.

The questionnaire for assessing the professional responsibilities and competences of the sports counselor was evaluated with maximum of points 5 by 196 specialists, with 4 points by 74 specialists, with 3 points by 166 specialists, with 2 points by 28 specialists and with 1 point by 7 specialists in the field of physical education and sport (Table 2). For scale 1 The responsibilities of the sports counselor of the QRCPS questionnaire the ratio of the specialists who gave maximum score was 181 specialists, 4 points were given by 80 specialists, 3 points were given by 171 specialists, 2 points were given by 28 specialists and only 11 specialists evaluated it with 1 point. For the scale The professional competencies of the sports counselor of the QRCPS questionnaire the ratio of the specialists who awarded the maximum point was 217 specialists, 4 points were given by 67 specialists, 3 points by 157 specialists, 2 points by 27 specialists and only 3 specialists evaluated with 1 point. (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Statistical analysis of the ratio of responses according to the Likert scale (5) on each item at the 2 scales of the QRCPS questionnaire

Scale	Items	Ratio of answers N(%)				
		5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Responsibilities of sports counselor	Item 1. Collects, selects information and informs athletes about the evolution of the sports field.	172 (36)	30 (41.7)	152 (31.8)	44 (9.2)	0 (0)
	Item 2. Identifies the professional problems of athletes with an impact on sports performance and working relationships and looks for ways to solve them.	191 (40)	84 (17.6)	162 (33.9)	24 (5)	17 (3.6)
	Item 3. It guides the athletes in solving the professional problems that they face at different moments of their career	237 (49.6)	56 (11.7)	163 (34.5)	20 (4.2)	0 (0)
	Item 4. It guides the athletes in solving the professional problems that they face at different moments of their career.	193 (40.4)	64 (13.4)	203 (42.5)	10 (2.1)	8 (1.7)
	Item 5. It proposes alternative solutions and facilitates the choice by the athlete of the optimal variant of action in correlation with his own interests and professional objectives.	157 (32.8)	100 (20.9)	203 (42.5)	10 (2.1)	8 (1.7)
	Item 6. It manages the athletes's relations with the sports structures and with the environment of promoting the athletes's personal brand.	166 (34.7)	92 (19.2)	164 (34.3)	44 (9.2)	12 (2.5)
	Item 7. It provides the connections between the different sports structures and the athletes.	153 (32)	108 (22.6)	148 (31)	69 (14.4)	0 (0)
	Item 8. Assists the athletes during the negotiations.	144 (30.1)	74 (15.5)	196 (41)	34 (7.1)	30 (6.3)
	Item 9. Advises the athletes in case of conflict situations.	218 (45.6)	84 (17.6)	155 (32.4)	0 (0)	21 (4.4)
	Item 10. Orientates and monitors subjects in independent physical activity in order to improve the health and quality of life.	178 (37.2)	99 (20.7)	166 (34.7)	23 (4.8)	12 (2.5)

Item 1. Informing the athletes about the evolution of the sports field.	186 (38.9)	84 (17.6)	175 (36.6)	33 (6.9)	0 (0)
Item 2. Counseling athletes to negotiate contracts.	218 (45.6)	59 (12.3)	179 (37.4)	12 (2.5)	10 (2.1)
Item 3. Providing counseling to athletes on professional issues.	280 (58.6)	22 (4.6)	155 (32.4)	21 (4.4)	0 (0)
Item 4. Monitoring the sports training process. sports counselor	184 (38.5)	98 (20.5)	139 (29.1)	45 (9.4)	12 (2.5)
Item 5. Representation of athletes in relation to sports structures.	216 (45.2)	77 (16.1)	165 (34.5)	20 (4.2)	0 (0)
Item 6. Facilitating the solving of conflicts in sports relationships.	246 (51.5)	44 (9.2)	146 (30.5)	42 (8.8)	0 (0)
Item 7. Orientation of clients in motor activity	200 (41.8)	94 (19.7)	163 (34.1)	21 (4.4)	0 (0)

N – number of subjects, % - percentage

We presented the ratio of answers on each item to highlight the distribution of expert opinions and identify the most relevant or lowest values. The responsibilities of the sports counselor, according to the occupational standard (Table 3) reveal positive correlation between all items. The correlation was only average for item 2 with 8, otherwise all values showed strong and very strong correlations between items, values being between 0.5 and 0.9. All correlations were statistically significant.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics of Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of scale 1 Responsibilities of the sports counselor of the QRCPC questionnaire, according to the occupational standard

Items	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6	Item7	Item8	Item9	Item10
Item 1. Collects, selects information and informs athletes about the evolution of the sports field.	-	.650	.768	.613	.629	.641	.641	.509	.751	.676
Item 2. Identifies the professional problems of athletes with an impact on sports performance and working relationships and looks for ways to solve them.	.650	-	.714	.694	.626	.579	.551	.436	.624	.768
Item 3. It guides the athletes in solving the professional problems that they face at different moments of their career	.768	.714	-	.733	.775	.621	.632	.504	.813	.701
Item 4. It guides the athletes in solving the professional problems that they face at different moments of their career	.613	.694	.733	-	.870	.677	.691	.650	.546	.665
Item 5. It proposes alternative solutions and facilitates the choice by the athlete of the optimal variant of action in correlation with his own interests and professional objectives	.629	.626	.775	.870	-	.553	.629	.698	.593	.614
Item 6. It manages the athletes's relations with the sports structures and with the environment of promoting the athletes's personal brand.	.641	.579	.621	.677	.553	-	.718	.723	.584	.768
Item 7. It provides the connections between the different sports structures and the athletes.	.641	.551	.632	.691	.629	.718	-	.630	.561	.593
Item 8. Assists the athletes during the negotiations.	.509	.436	.504	.650	.698	.723	.630	-	.541	.534
Item 9. Advises the athletes in case of conflict situations.	.751	.624	.813	.546	.593	.584	.561	.541	-	.646
Item 10. Orientates and monitors subjects in independent physical activity in order to improve the health and quality of life.	.676	.768	.701	.665	.614	.768	.593	.534	.646	-

All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level.

In case of scale 2 Professional competences of the sports counselor of the QRCPC questionnaire, according to the occupational standard, analysis of the correlation between the items reveals positive

and statistically significant correlation between all items. All the values showed strong and very strong correlations between the items, the values being between 0.6 and 0.9 (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics **Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of scale 2 - The professional competencies of the sports counselor of the QRCPSC questionnaire, according to the occupational standard**

Items	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7
Item 1. Informing the athletes about the evolution of the sports field.	-	.793	.816	.834	.771	.747	.807
Item 2. Counseling athletes to negotiate contracts.	.793	-	.752	.753	.849	.787	.757
Item 3. Providing counseling to athletes on professional issues.	.816	.752	-	.789	.726	.864	.863
Item 4. Monitoring the sports training process.	.834	.753	.789	-	.705	.697	.682
Item 5. Representation of athletes in relation to sports structures.	.771	.849	.726	.705	-	.834	.807
Item 6. Facilitating the solving of conflicts in sports relationships.	.747	.787	.864	.697	.834	-	.872
Item 7. Orientation of clients in motor activity.	.807	.757	.863	.682	.807	.872	-

All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study allowed us to perform a hierarchy on scientific data based on the opinion of the experts in the field of physical and sports activities and on the identification that between all responsibilities and the respective ones between the professional competences, there is a strong correlation. The ranking of the responsibilities of the sports counselor in the view of the experts in the field of physical and sports activities, based on the results of the study is the following: Item 3. Orientates the athletes in solving the professional problems that they face at different moments of their career, Item 9. Advise the athletes in case of conflict situations, Item 4. Orientates the athletes in solving the professional problems they face in different moments of their career, Item 1. Gathers, selects the information and informs the athletes on the evolution of the sports field, Item 10. Orientates and monitors subjects in the independent physical activity in order to improve health and quality of life, Item 2. Identifies the professional problems of athletes with an impact on sports performance and working relationships and looks for ways to solve them, Item 5. Proposes alternative solutions and facilitates the choice by the athlete of variants and optimal actions in correlation with their own professional interests and goals, Item 6. Manages the athlete's relationships with the sports structures and with the environment of promoting the athlete's personal brand, Item 7. Ensures the connections between the different sports structures and the athlete, Item 8. Assists the athletes during the negotiations. Regarding the professional competences, their hierarchy in the view of the experts on the importance is: Item 3. Providing consultancy to athletes on professional issues, Item 6. Facilitating the solution of conflicts from sports relations, Item 5. Representation of athletes in relation to sports structures, Item 7. Clients orientation regarding motor activity, Item 2. Counseling athletes to negotiate contracts, Item 1. Informing athletes about the evolution of the sports field, Item 4. Monitoring the sports preparation process.

Our study complements the research in the field of sports counseling. Numerous studies have highlighted the role and benefits on the quality of life, learning and health of the sports counseling process on different categories of students (Hilliard, Redmond, & Watson, 2019; Kliethermes et al, 2019; Menke, & Germany, 2019; Proper et.al. 2004). Studies have shown that sports counseling based on individualized protocols has positive influences at all levels of physical activity practice and physical fitness (Miller, Ogilvie, & Adams, 2000; Proper, 2003). In accordance with the results of our study regarding the responsibilities of the sports counselor, studies conducted on adults have shown that the counseling process has led to an increased in self-esteem, awareness of personal needs and preferences, increased interest in promoting an active, correct and healthy proactive lifestyle (Wagner, Mullen, & Sims, 2019; Bilon, & Kargul, 2012; McBride, & Hays, 2012; Dinç, & Özbek, 2019).

Joining the few empirical studies on the importance of the process of sports counseling for experts, the results of this study fill a gap in the literature on this topic.

Strengths: the large number of experts in the field of physical and sports activities included in the study, evaluation of all responsibilities and competencies included in the occupational standard; identification of the correlations between the items of the two scales of the QRCPSC questionnaire; identification of the imported practice based on which we have achieved the ranking of the important responsibilities and competences of the sports counselor. Expansion of future research on the efficiency of sports counseling activity at all activity levels and in different population categories.

Limits of the study: not including in the study the other categories involved in the sports activity, like professional athletes, amateur athletes, managers of sports institutions, students; failure to evaluate the relationship between experts in the field of physical and sports activities with sports counselors.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study contributed to the hierarchy of professional responsibilities and competencies of the sports counselor in the expert's vision, which facilitates the efficiency of the counseling process and identifies the activities and roles relevant from the point of view of the sports counseling process. The development of the practice in the career of sports counseling is based on the impact that the responsibilities and professional competences are reflected in the vision of the experts with major influences on the mentality of the students, athletes and recreational practitioners of physical and sports activities.

The implementation and development of the occupation of sports counselor is now a necessity, which can contribute to the efficiency of the sports management process, of the sports training, of the recreational activities and implicitly of promoting a sporting, proactive and healthy lifestyle.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Based on the results of this study, we consider that a revision of the occupational standard is required based on the impact on which the responsibilities and professional competencies are reflected in the expert's view and in relation to the trends of the sporting phenomenon, of physical education and of recreational activities.

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