



## EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE EFQM EXCELLENCE MODEL IN MEGA SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

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### **Abstract:**

The EFQM Excellence Model, which is a scale based on the rules of total quality management, is applied to companies, both in the private and public sectors, with the aim of better satisfying both consumers and employees (Foncera, Amaral and Oliveira, 2021). The purpose of the present paper was to record employees' perceptions of the EFQM Excellence Model in mega sports organizations. It was hypothesized that the average of the five criteria namely Leadership, Human Resources, Strategy and Policy, Suppliers / Sponsors / Resources, and Procedures that they constitute the enablers, would not differ significantly from the average of the four results criteria namely Results for customers, Results of Human Resources, Results for society and Performance Results that they constitute the results. Ninety-nine employees of Peace and Friendship Stadium, who agreed to take part in the study completed the questionnaire of the Administrative Excellence of Greek Sports Organizations (Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos, 2014), which was modified accordingly for the purpose of the study. The reliability check produced a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  index of 0.88, while the corresponding indices for the 9 criteria ranged from 0.77 to 0.90. After the analysis of the data carried out with descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon test, it was founded that there was a statistically significant difference between the five and four model's criteria ( $3.77 \pm 0.35$  vs.  $3.30 \pm 0.34$ ,  $z = -8.391$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It is concluded that the perceptions of the employees of the Peace and Friendship stadium are positive for the criteria of the conditions of the European model of business excellence and less positive for its results.

**Keywords:** protocols, cardiovascular disease, teenagers, respiratory fitness, physical activity

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of excellence has been disseminated throughout time within the business and academic community, after the introduction of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Award in Europe, that first awarded in 1992. Since then, several business excellences models (BEMs) have been proposed. These models are supported by business excellence (BE) criteria framed within a holistic framework supported by a set of core values or fundamental concepts with both business enablers and business results (Fonseca, Amaral, and Oliveira, 2021). From the beginning of its use, the EFQM model is recognized as a global structure that helps organizations regardless of their size or sector scope or business sector manage change and improve organizational performance (Hussain, Edgeman, and Eskildsen, 2018).

To ensure its validity and reliability, the EFQM model is subject to periodic reviews and adjustments based on industry and academic research, supported by various topics and methodologies that foster the integration of a wide range of management areas. One of the main strengths of the model is its ability to support self-assessment exercises. The self-assessment process is based on the regular and systematic analysis of a set of organizational dimensions that correspond to the model criteria (Fonseca, 2015; Nair, 2006). The model encourages the self-assessment team to look at the organization's system and practices to facilitate improvement and the exercise leads to the identification of a series of strengths and areas for improvement (Hussain, Edgeman, and Eskildsen, 2018). The EFQM's business excellence model is based on two main pillars. Those that determine the developments in the organization, the enablers, and those that arise from the operation of the enablers of the organization, i.e., the results (EFQM, 2021). The EFQM consists of nine criteria. The five of them, namely Leadership, Human Resources, Strategy and Policy, Suppliers / Sponsors / Resources, and Procedures are the set of enablers, while the other four are the Results for customers, the Results of Human Resources, Results for society and Performance Results, are the set of the results (E.F.Q.M., 2019; 2021).

## 2. Review of Literature

As noticed, the EFQM is probably the most widely used framework and gives a holistic and integrated perspective of the performance of an organization. This model can be applied to any industry and any sector. Most of the publishing studies were conducted in business, manufacturing, engineering, and higher education, while sports is a relatively new trend (Black, Meredith, and Groombridge, 2011; Karastathis et al, 2021). For example, Campatelli, Citti, and Meneghin (2011) supported that the EFQM model promotes the use of a standard management system capable of steering an organization toward excellence with a homogeneous evaluation procedure.

Kasperaviciute (2013) points out that the application of a quality model to educational institutions that relies on their internal needs is beneficial in identifying weak points and areas for improvement.

Rosa, Sarrico, and Amaral (2012) also investigated the application of EFQM model in the field of higher education, where there is a growing concern over quality and social accountability. The authors supported the need for higher education institutions to develop their own internal total quality management systems.

Demir and Sertbaş (2018) investigated the perceptions of sports club managers about total quality management systems and determine whether these applications are implemented effectively. The study sample was composed of 123 managers, employing operating under the Kocaeli Amateur Sports Clubs Federation. The validity of the EFQM scale revealed a Cronbach's alpha 0,970. The results of their study showed a positive attitude towards the applicability of total quality management processes in the clubs.

Karastathis, et al. (2021), compared the perceptions of 100 managers, who worked in Greek Sports Federations, which were divided as large (received a grant of over 1,000,000 €), medium (received a grant of 100,000-to 770,000 € and small (with a grant of 10,000 to 75,000 €). The subjects of their study answered a validated questionnaire of EFQM. The results of their study revealed that there were significant differences in the perceptions of the three levels of the HSFs' managerial hierarchy regarding the extent to which processes of managerial excellence are implemented. Also, a significant difference in the perceptions of the three levels of the managerial hierarchy regarding the implementation of processes of managerial excellence was observed. More, the highest degree for the implementation of excellence processes in the HSFs was expressed by the board members, while the lowest degree was expressed by the employees.

E Sa and Fernandes, (2020), conducted a study to evaluate a physical education program for the elderly in Sports and Youth organization of Spain Municipalities based on the EFQM model. The data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, as well as with documentation held by the team responsible for the program. In the study participates 11 instructors and 50 physical education program participants. The results showed that the EFQM model provided a comprehensive and holistic view of the physical education programs. While the understanding of stakeholders' needs and expectations and the way partnerships are managed have been pointed out as the main strengths of the programs, people results have emerged as a major candidate for improvement. Also, listening to a multiplicity of stakeholders by means of questionnaires and/or semi-structured interviews focused on specific model dimensions has been revealed to be a good strategy.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine employees' perceptions of the EFQM in mega sports organizations such as Peace and Friendship Stadium. It was hypothesized that the mean score of the five criteria that are the model enablers (leadership, human resources, strategy and policy, suppliers / sponsors / resources, processes), would not differ significantly from the mean the four results criteria (results for people, results for customers, cultural associations, public limited companies, results for society, financial results).

### 3. Material and Methods

During the present study, a total of 123 people were working at the Peace and Friendship stadium. Initially, the researcher SD contacted the Board members, directors, and managers and informed them about the purpose of the investigation and the possibility to submit a questionnaire for completion. She also informed them about the time required to complete the questionnaires and emphasized that they are anonymous and that the results will be used for scientific purposes. The directors informed the heads of all existing departments and offices about the conduct of the investigation. The latter informed the employees about the possibility of participating in the study by completing a questionnaire and scheduling the researcher's arrival hours at their workplace. In the same way, the secretaries of the administration, the council, the president, and the vice president were informed.

After organizing this process, the researcher SD began to deliver the questionnaires and complete them on the spot by personally attending the employees' workplace. The collection of data from the people of the Peace and Friendship stadium took place over a period of 12 months. At the end of this period, 99 questionnaires were completed (rate 80, 50 %). A response rate of 50% to 60% can be considered satisfactory for the purposes, analysis, and evaluation of the conclusions of a survey (Rea and Parker, 1997).

The data collection of the present study was carried out with a validated EFQM questionnaire after permission (Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos, and Theodorakis, 2014), and were analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 28). The using techniques were descriptives, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and the Wilcoxon test (Creswell, 2018; Robson, 2016).

### 4. Results-Discussion

Sixty-nine people working at the Peace and Friendship stadium were men and thirty were women. Eleven were lower than thirty years of age, thirty-one forty to forty-nine years, and the remaining fifty-seven over fifty years. More details about the demographic characteristics of the employees are presented in Table 1. The test of reliability and validity of the questionnaire was conducted with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results showed that the scale had a high level of reliability ( $\alpha = 0,86$ ), while the corresponding scores for the 9 criteria ranged from 0.77 to 0.90, (Creswell, 2018). This information is presented in Table 2.

Comparison of the five criteria scores by the enablers (leadership, human resources, strategy and policy, suppliers/sponsors/resources and procedures), which were  $3,77 \pm 0,35$ , with the corresponding results scores (results for customers, results of human resources, results for society and performance results), which were  $3,30 \pm 0,34$ , a statistical difference was founded ( $p < 0,001$ ; Table 3 and 4).

**Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of the study subjects**

	N	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Men	69	69,7
Women	30	30,3
<b>Age (years)</b>		
<30	11	11,1
40-49	31	31,3
>50	57	57,6
<b>Employment years</b>		
<30	20	20,2
40-49	24	24,2
>50	55	55,6
<b>Duty position</b>		
Board members	7	7,1
Directors/managers	12	12,1
Employee	80	80,8
<b>Education level</b>		
MA, PhD	12	12,1
Higher education diploma	18	18,2
Secondary education (Gymnasion, in Greek)	69	69,7
<b>Attention of management seminars</b>		
Yes	80	80,8
No	19	19,2
<b>Employment relationship</b>		
Permanent staff	87	87,9
Contractual employee	12	12,1

**Table 2: Reliability of instruments criteria (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ )**

Criteria EFQM	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Number of items
Leadership	0,82	6
Human resources	0,77	8
Policy and strategy	0,85	10
Suppliers-Sponsors-Resources	0,78	7
Processes	0,84	9
People results	0,81	9
Customer results	0,80	6
Society results	0,83	8
Key performance results	0,81	7

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of enablers and results**

	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Enablers</b>	99	3,77	,35	2,86	4,48
<b>Results</b>	99	3,30	0,34	2,48	3,99

**Table 4:** NPar tests

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	Results - Enablers
Z	-8,391a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,001
a. Based on positive ranks.	
b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	

The purpose of the present study was to determine if the average of the five criteria of the enablers (Leadership, Human Resources, Strategy and Policy, Suppliers / Sponsors / Resources, and Procedures that they constitute), would not differ significantly from the average of the results criteria (Results for customers, Results of Human Resources, Results for society and Performance Results that they constitute the results).

We found that the reliability of the scale is in accordance with already published studies conducted in sports organizations (Alanasari, Sallaoui and Souissi, 2018; Faraji, Sani and Poursoltani, 2012; Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos and Theodorakis, 2014; Matsaggidis and Gargalianos, 2017; Karastathis et al., 2021; Moreno and Suarez, 2016; Rial and Carral, 2015). The mean score of enablers observed in the study ( $3,77 \pm 0.35$ ), is similar with Matsaggidis and Gargalianos (2017), which was conducted on employees in Greek federations. A similar score on the five criteria of enablers, was recorded in the research of Martinez-Moreno and Suarez (2016). Also, Faraji, Sani and Poursoltani (2012), in another study found that the criteria “enablers” were scored up to 64, 8%. Also, in a study conducted by Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos and Theodorakis (2014), the score of the “enablers” criterion was  $3.88 \pm 1.02$ . The same scores in the above-mentioned studies were observed in the four criteria of results. The results of our study confirm that the enablers criteria according to employee perceptions at Peace and Friendship Stadium, are necessary in order to achieve positive results that can lead the athletic organization to better management.

## 5. Recommendations

Board members, directors, and managers of Mega sports organizations should take into account the results of the present study in order to organize in a better way the criteria of the EFQM Excellence Model. Thus, the employees will understand the items of each criterion ensuring better satisfaction both for themselves and their customers.

## 6. Conclusion

It is concluded that the perceptions of the employees of the Peace and Friendship stadium are positive for the criteria of the conditions of the European model of business excellence and less positive for its results.

Future research should focus on all management levels of the Mega sports organizations and maybe compare the difference in the variables such as duty position or management styles.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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