

Managing psycho-social factors to develop junior golf players

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35683/jcm21004.171>

STEPHANUS JOHANNES ROOS*

Management Sciences, North-West University, South Africa

Email: Fanie.Roos@nwu.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2817-5748>

*corresponding author

BAREND JOHANNES STEYN

Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Email: ben.steyn@up.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5081-7439>

RE-AN MÜLLER

Management Sciences, North-West University, South Africa

Email: Rean.Muller@nwu.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8830-1080>

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: Golf has evolved into a professional sport, which places greater demands on golf coaches and managers to deliver players with high skill levels. There is a paucity of research regarding the developmental pathway for junior golf players to reach professional level. The purpose of this study was to determine how to effectively manage the transition of junior golf players to a professional level.

Design/methodology/approach: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 former or current Sunshine Tour players, Professional Golfers Association of South Africa (PGA of SA) members, PGA of SA teaching professionals and/or golf administrators.

Findings: The Professional Golfers Development Framework (PGDF) for junior golfers in the South African context was developed.

Recommendations/value: The PGDF suggests that social support, coaching, specialisation, financing, psychology, lifestyle and branding are aspects that have a significant influence on golf player development.

Managerial implications: By utilising the PGDF, junior golf players may achieve greater success in their transition to become a professional golfer through developmental programmes

Keywords

Ecological approach; Junior golfer; Managing; Professional golfer transition

JEL Classification: M00, M31

1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Golf has evolved from a recreational activity to the chosen career path of many athletes. As a result, professionals are now seeking assistance from various sources to achieve success at the highest level. Sport has developed into a business and in order for athletes to be successful, adequate player management is needed (Adcroft & Teckman, 2009, Stewart *et al.*, 2018). Player management has become an important aspect of the sport industry, therefore further education in this subject is required (Ko, 2013).

1.1 The ecological approach

When looking at sport as a whole, certain psycho-social and environmental factors such as parental support and coaches' behaviour may influence success in sport (Coutinho *et al.*, 2016). When considering the management of athletes, the ecological approach identified by Bronfenbrenner (1999) indicates that the culmination of the entire environment plays a significant role in athlete development (Larsen *et al.*, 2012, Human, 2015). The collective environmental influence can be investigated using an ecological approach integrated with the social constructionism approach. The social constructionism paradigm involves studying participants' interactions and analysing the reasons for their actions. Adams *et al.* (2004) identify social interactions as the manner in which an individual's reality is shaped, and this is also greatly dependent on the cultural and historical influence that affects their lives. Therefore, reality is constructed by interpreting the social world as a language or system of meanings (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Using social constructionism as a paradigm allows the social world of the individual to construct knowledge by conveying their own experience (Burr, 2015). The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem models as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1977) are essential in the developmental process of individuals. The microsystem consists of the direct system the individual is involved in, such as family, friends, coaches and parents (Visser, 2007). Next is the mesosystem, which can be described as a total network of interrelationships and interdependence (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, Krebs, 2009). As such, this network involves relationships such as player and psychologist. The exosystem refers to one or more settings that the developing person is not an active participant in. However, this environment may indirectly influence the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). When a coach has a family crisis at the home, it may affect a player even though it is not the environment he competes in (Krebs, 2009). Lastly, the macrosystem refers to the broader environment that interacts with the developing person and has an influence on their life. As such, it encompasses all three previous levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This level may also refer to sport governing bodies that provide a

national and sport culture that a player needs to abide by (Henriksen *et al.*, 2010). The player does not have direct contact with this system, however, this may influence performance (Human, 2015). However, limited research has indicated sufficient methods to develop elite golfers following an ecological approach (Hayman *et al.*, 2014). This ecological approach provides the players with the opportunity to interact with the social and physical dimensions involved (Visser, 2007, Larsen *et al.*, 2012).

1.2 Current professional golfer development practices

Golf players make use of a coach, psychologist, fitness trainer and of course the support of family and friends. All of these aspects play a significant psychological role in their performance (Gordin, 2016). Athletes develop physically, technically, tactically and psychologically (Human, 2015), and these aspects are of paramount importance in the golf environment.

The question that many golf professionals have to deal with is when is the correct age for a child to start playing golf. Malina (2010) states that limiting an athlete to one sport may not be the most effective method to achieve success in elite level sport. Golf is a lifetime sport and there is no need to specialise too early, but this is still the case with many junior golfers (Phillips, 2013b). Early specialisation is not the most effective method and playing more sport will serve the athlete better at a later stage (Phillips, 2013b, Coyle, 2014, Hansen, 2014).

The knowledge gap that exists, is how do golf professionals, managers, coaches and parents successfully manage a junior golfer's career in such a way that the opportunity may arise for them to compete at the highest level. There are many golf programmes and coaches. However, everyone has their own opinion and method, with no thorough understanding of a universal framework for the correct transitional path for junior golfers. The field of sport management is growing at a rapid pace and this area of research is becoming more important (Drakulevski *et al.*, 2014). Stewart *et al.* (2018) refer to sport management in a different manner, by preferring to the term player management.

The International Management Group (IMG) is one of the leading player management groups in the world (Stewart *et al.*, 2018). According to many, the world of player management is a new venture, however, in 1960 Arnold Palmer signed a deal to be managed by IMG. Arnold Palmer a winner of multiple major titles, was one of the most courageous and loving golfers to ever play the game, this assisted in his brand going from strength to strength (Arnold Palmer Enterprises, 2018). Mark McCormack the founder of IMG had the expertise of realising potential and selling athletes as marketable commodities

(Stewart *et al.*, 2018). McCormack soon signed contracts with Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, and more recently, Ernie Els and Tiger Woods. Octagon, a rival of IMG, manages Olympic swimming legend, Michael Phelps. Octagon is a sport marketing and management company promoting athletes in 35 different sports globally. Phelps has created a brand that has scored him a number of lucrative endorsement deals (Stewart *et al.*, 2018).

Researchers in this domain needs to develop a greater understanding of sport management in order to achieve success (Chadwick, 2009). This needs to start at junior level in order for athletes to achieve success. One of the first considerations is that needs to be a continuation of playing the sport.

2. METHOD

The ecological approach brought forward by Bronfenbrenner (1977) and the social constructionism paradigm formed the basis from which the data were collected and interpreted. The research design that was followed was a social-constructivist paradigm guided by the ecological model provided by Bronfenbrenner (1986). The PGA of SA is the leader in the golf industry and has more than 500 members actively involved in all facets of the game (Gunn, 2012). The target population for this study is former and current Sunshine Tour players, PGA of SA members, PGA of SA teaching professionals and golf administrators. For this research study, the researcher contacted the PGA of SA to gain permission for the study to be conducted. Once permission letters from the PGA of SA were granted, ethical clearance was granted and several possible participants were contacted and informed about the research study and their possible involvement.

This study made use of semi-structured interviews during the data collection process. This method was chosen due to the participants being experts in the field. Therefore, the researcher may gather more information from the participants that are not documented in the interview schedule. The interview questions were derived from Jorlén (2008) and Hayman *et al.* (2014). The researcher's knowledge of the research subject, and the questions used by Hayman *et al.* (2014) and Jorlén (2008) guided the compilation of the semi-structured interviews. The questions posed to discuss the following:

- a) The amount of participation in golf at a young age.
- b) Identify aspects the athlete felt were needed for success.
- c) Identify the effect that psychology plays in the success of a player.
- d) To be able to identify methods used to effectively manage the player's career.

- e) Identify negative barriers in the career of a player/coach.
- f) Discuss the social support that was present as a young golfer.

3. ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis in qualitative research is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a method of identifying themes that form patterns during the data collection. This method was used to analyse the data that were collected by means of the semi-structured interviews. According to Braun *et al.* (2006), this is a method that is used regularly in qualitative research and is compatible with a social constructionism paradigm. Corbin and Strauss (2015) posit that using this type of analysis allows the researcher to group the data into smaller units.

According to Jones (2015), the researcher needs to be familiar with the data by studying the transcripts and listening to it numerous times so that irrelevant information can be discarded. However, the researcher needs to ensure that the data are available at a later stage if needed. Next, the data needs to be organised by means of coding, constructing themes and identifies important aspects needed in order to answer the research question (Ellis, 2016). According to Jones (2015), coding involves organising the data into categories. Each code developed is a category where data from the interview is placed, this provides the raw data with some logical structure. Once coding has taken place, the researcher will look for developing themes, these themes form a label for a group of linked codes (Jones, 2015). When compiling the research findings, the researcher revisited the codes as different ideas developed. As a result, a recurrence process of analysing data ensures a holistic approach towards the data analysis.

4. RESULTS

By connecting with professionals in the industry, knowledge from an “insider perspective” was obtained in order to gather guidelines for junior golfers to follow. The following themes emerged during the data analysis: *social support, coaching, specialisation, finance, psychology, lifestyle and branding*. These themes proved to be the most important in the success of a junior golfer and are discussed below:

4.1 Social support

Social support was a theme that emerged with each participant and it was stated that it forms an integral part of the success of a player. Coaches, friends, parents and family all form part of the social environment. The negative, as well as the positive influences of social support structures have been revealed in the qualitative data.

4.1.1. Negative influence

Participants relate to many negative parents in their coaching and the result of this was that juniors stopped playing the game and quit. The reason for this in many cases was the amount of pressure that parents put on their child to perform from a young age. Numerous participants commented that parents just need to be parents and not the coach.

4.1.2. Positive influence

In other instances, parents had a positive influence on the players and the participants noted that there was a marked difference between players with supportive parents and those who had too much pressure to perform. The participants also highlighted that if a parent believes in the player and shows their support, then success may be easier to achieve.

4.1.3. Importance of social support

Participants noted that the support in the social environment that a player receives plays a huge role in the continuation and success in golf. It was emphasised that the social support structure is crucial and the importance cannot be emphasised enough. During the interview process, each participant identified the parents of a junior golfer as the most influential in the social support structure. However, according to participants, other people in the support structure such as the coach, fitness trainer and psychologist also has a large influence.

4.2 Coaching

Participants were asked which aspects had the biggest influence on their career or that of their players. Swing changes, mentorship and simplicity were identified as the aspects that made the biggest difference.

4.2.1. Preparation changes

Participants stated that keeping a player's natural ability is crucial and that making significant changes to a player's swing may not be the correct method. It was said that a player has to work on the swing he has and only make small changes. One participant said that he made the biggest mistake of his career by making too many swing changes. As a result, he lost the natural ability he had. This particular participant stated that under pressure a player always reverts to what feels natural.

4.2.2. Mentorship

The participants highlighted that being a mentor to a player is a vital aspect of maturing the player for success. The coach needs to understand the person in order for him to make the

necessary decisions and guide the player sufficiently. One participant stated that being a mentor involves caring about the person and showing real interest in them.

4.2.3. Transition strategies

This theme forms the platform for the developmental stages that a junior need to follow, which important aspects a coach needs to look at and what skills need to be developed. Participants were asked to identify transition strategies they feel will assist a junior golfer to reach professional level and be successful. Participants were also asked to argue the effectiveness of the transition strategies in South Africa.

4.2.4. Developmental skills

Many participants stated that this process is something that takes time and that juniors need to stick to a plan. If players rush the process and they are not patient enough, burnout may occur. Participants also emphasised that children need to develop other skills before they will be successful in golf. These skills include jumping, kicking, throwing, skipping and the list goes on. Participants noted that these skills teach children fundamental movement skills needed in a golf swing.

4.2.5. Fun component in golf

Many participants emphasised that kids need to have fun first before they can be successful. Some participants expressed the need for having fun as young golf participants and also emphasised that they considered terminating their participation due to lack of fun. Often parents want their kids to have individual coaching, one participant stated that at a young age kids need to be playing with a friend, if they do not, they will stop having fun and quit.

4.3 Specialisation

Specialisation is a topic that is spoken about often in the sport industry. There are many schools of thought on when to specialise. However, this research study clearly indicates that early specialisation may not be the correct process to follow. Playing other sport, other than golf, was emphasised as important by each participant. Although there is sport that has a negative effect on golf, the participants highlighted the fact that a player can participate in any sport rather than doing none at all. The benefits of playing other sport in the pursuit of being a professional are endless and are discussed below (Brenner, 2016).

4.3.1. Early versus late specialisation

During the entirety of the interview process, there was not one participant that stated that early specialisation is the correct process to follow. Every participant emphasised that late

specialisation is the correct method to follow for a child to achieve success. It was reiterated that children are also more than just golfers; they are human beings that need to develop as individuals and have more than just a golf swing. Participants said that if juniors are well-balanced in their life, they are more likely to achieve success because they are mentally stronger.

In every interview, participants overwhelmingly stated that athletes should play as many sports as possible at a young age. There was not one participant that said that children should only play golf from a young age.

4.3.2. Negative effect of early specialisation

One consequence of early specialisation that was noted was that a child's body develops in an unbalanced manner. The other negative effect that was noted by numerous participants was the loss of the players from the game, due to a lack of enjoyment. Participants stated that when juniors specialise too early, they often lose interest and do not enjoy it anymore.

4.3.3. Age to specialise

Each participant noted that specialisation in golf should only commence between the ages of 14–16, depending on the individual. Participants also said that during this age the body has developed physically and mentally at an adequate level and is ready to specialise. Despite specialisation being a common phase for athletes, some participants argue that even after specialisation in golf a player may play other sport as well.

4.3.4. Benefits of playing a variety of sport

It was noted that playing other sports has numerous benefits such as confidence, longevity, flexibility, strength and also mental benefits. These mental benefits were identified as dealing with failure, working in a team and also being able to accept responsibility.

4.4 Finance

During the interviews, the participants were asked what barriers exist in the pursuit of becoming a professional golfer. The lifestyle of a professional golfer combined with finances have been emphasised as essential prerequisites in achieving success in golf.

4.4.1. Financial pressure

Finances proved to be one of the biggest barriers to success stated by the participants. It was pointed out that when players have the financial implications of failure hanging over

their heads it causes undue pressure. Where players are playing without that financial burden in their heads they often perform better.

4.4.2. Financial support

The lack of financial support also prevents players from entering certain tournaments, employing the correct support personnel like a quality swing coach, psychologists, fitness trainer and dietician. This also may prevent them from having proper equipment, therefore not being able to perform at the desired level. Where players have adequate financial support the transition is easier for them and they can solely focus on playing golf.

4.5 Psychology

Each participant identified the psychological side of golf competition as influential in the success of a golfer. What participants experienced about psychology in golf was revealed in five subthemes, namely mental attributes, negative mental aspects, mental skills practice, golf psychologists and importance.

4.5.1. Mental attributes

The majority of the participants confirmed that the mental attributes that a player possesses play a crucial role to achieve success. It was stated by participants that there are many players with the same technical abilities, however, the individuals who excel are the ones with a strong mental game. Being positive, having self-belief and confidence are some of the keywords that emerged among participants. Participants also focussed on the fact that a desire to become professional, as well as dedication in this process, is absolutely vital to achieve success. This mental approach was highlighted by many participants as an important prerequisite for success.

4.5.2. Negative mental aspects

As emphasised by participants in this research study, mental attributes are important and especially the manner in which negative mental aspects are controlled. Some mental aspects that were identified by participants are the following: financial pressure, acceptance, anxiety, self-doubt and patience. Numerous participants stated that acceptance is a key component of the success of a professional golfer. As explained by a participant, acceptance refers to players moving on and forgetting about a bad shot that happened on the golf course. Numerous participants emphasised that this is vital for success.

4.5.3. *Mental skills practice*

Recreating pressure situations and simulating high pressure situations were noted by many participants as an important aspect in order to develop adequate mental attributes required for professional golf. Participants stated that pressure situations can be created by means of a point system and an outcome at the end of the session. According to one participant creating difficulty such as hitting out of divots can assist a player when this situation occurs on the golf course.

4.6 Lifestyle

A lifestyle suitable for the golf environment has to be developed in the transition phase from junior to professional level to be able to sustain a high level of performance in golf. Participants also describe the life of a professional golfer as lonely. Therefore, this is an aspect that needs to be looked at closely.

4.6.1. *Lifestyle that is conducive to success in golf*

The lifestyle needed to become a professional emerged as one of the themes that was noted by many participants as important. Golf was marked as a selfish sport and that professional golfers are loners. According to participants, players are often away from home and in some cases, this has a negative influence on performance. Participants stated that intrinsic motivation is an essential prerequisite for a player to reach professional level. This motivation to work hard needs to come from the player himself and not from the social support structure if this is achieved then a sufficient lifestyle will follow. The player will then have no problem with the “selfish lifestyle” as stated by a participant.

4.6.2. *Effect of professional lifestyle on performance*

The statement from many participants said that the lifestyle of a professional golfer is a barrier to success. Participants argued that travelling, being away from your family and being alone have a negative effect on many players. Another aspect that emerged is that due to the fact that professional golfers travel on a regular basis, many do not have lots of friends. This causes them to quit the sport.

4.7 Branding

Personal branding emerged as an important aspect in the success of a professional golfer. Many participants highlighted the importance of players to develop a unique brand for themselves.

4.7.1. Importance of branding

According to one participant, there are many professional golfers that do not comprehend the importance of personal branding. Each participant stated that personal branding is vital for the success of a professional golfer. It was emphasised that players need money to succeed. In order for them to receive the financial backing they need it will be required of them to attain a sponsorship of some kind and they will only receive this if they establish a successful brand of themselves.

4.7.2. Branding strategies

Participants stated that to establish a successful brand you need to interact with people and have conversations with people. The power of social media was also emphasised and according to participants, players need to be active on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Participants also stated that there lies a large responsibility on players to be disciplined and which activities of their personal life should not be posted on these platforms. It was also emphasised that in order to brand yourself successfully, a player needs to portray the complete package. This refers to physical appearance, golf performance, personality and attitude towards others. The important factors for the success of a junior golfer are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Important factors for the success of a junior golfer

Factors	Themes	Quotes
Social support	Negative influence, positive influence, resources needed, importance of social support	Parents need to be parents, they're not coaches. [86:33] ...they had Justin Thomas's father on...he is a PGA coach, and he was saying his biggest thing is talking to the parents, to say to the parents...don't put this pressure on your kid. Because he doesn't like what you're doing to him and he is going to show you by giving up golf, not behaving well on the golf course. [85:2]
Coaching	<u>Preparation changes</u> , mentorship, most important qualities needed for a golf coach, transition strategies, Golf RSA and <u>fun</u>	Because under pressure you always go back to what is natural. So you'd always try and keep those natural moves in whatever you doing. [88:9] Making the oaks feel like u care about them. [86:41]
Specialisation	Early vs. late specialisation, negative effect of early specialisation, sport that are <u>beneficial for golf</u> , sport that has an adverse effect on golf, <u>benefits of playing many sport</u>	I definitely would not just let them play golf, they've got to play other sports. [85:32] So when you turn 15-16 you need to specialise into golf. [87:29]
Finance	<u>Financial pressure</u> , financial support	I think financial strain can put as much pressure on a player as a swing change, or whatever it is. I think when you tee it up in a tournament, knowing that you have to make the cut in order to be able to pay for your travel, in order to get to the next tournament, it sort of detracts from the golf. I think that's where

		a lot of guys just come up short. [81:26] ...finances may be the one, the one thing that holds you back, because often you're standing over a put thinking if I miss this I am not going to be able to go to the next leg. That's a very very real problem, and that put undue pressure on that putt. [87:54]
Psychology	Mental attributes, personal character, negative mental aspects, mental skills practice, golf psychologist, importance of psychology.	I think it's... I think golf is all about being able to accept the bad brakes and move on. [85:17] So it's just trying to recreate what they going to do, out on the golf course. Try to recreate difficult lies that they have, like hitting shots out of divots. [81:19]
Lifestyle	<u>Lifestyle that is conducive to success in golf. Effect of professional lifestyle on performance</u>	It's not an easy lifestyle, it's a selfish sport, and you need to be selfish because it's a one-man show, you can't be injured. [77:8] And you travel a lot, so you're away from home all the time. [77:9]
Branding	<u>Branding strategies</u> , importance of branding, knowledge of branding and branding challenges	You know so I think it's how you carry yourself and how you, the whole package, you want to put a package together for yourself. [90:45] Well, you won't survive if you don't have that. [77:51]

Source: Own compilation

5. DISCUSSION

The foundation of the study was guided by the use of the ecological model by Bronfenbrenner (1977) and was confirmed by the results that emerged from the participants. The themes that emerged indicated that to achieve optimal performance a holistic approach is needed. Participants accentuated the importance of each aspect and highlighted that for a player to achieve success every aspect need to be mastered and function together as interconnected systems.

5.1 Social support

The social support structure of a junior as well as professional player need to be managed sufficiently and provide adequate opportunities for improvement. The individuals involved in the social support structure may have a significant influence on a player, both positive and negative. For a player to achieve success, it is essential that this environment does not consist of any undue pressure towards the performance of a child, as this may have discontinuation of the sport as a result. The environment that a player finds himself in and the support a player receives are crucial for them to participate and compete successfully in golf (Larsen *et al.*, 2012, Human, 2015, Coutinho *et al.*, 2016, Highfield, 2017, Moll *et al.*, 2017). For players to have better mental abilities the social support they receive from coaches, parents and friends are essential. Players need to have a team behind them such

as a swing coach, fitness trainer, psychologist and dietician who supports them through this process. Golf professionals employ fitness trainers, golf psychologists, swing coaches and managers in order for them to reach the highest level (Farrally *et al.*, 2003, Roos & Surujlal, 2014, Gordin, 2016). According to Ryan (2016), the people surrounding a PGA tour player is of utmost importance. When an agent, journalist, wife, sponsors and the fans do not behave appropriately, the player cannot focus on their game.

Coaches and parents need to move away from working on the individual and create a productive environment (Highfield, 2017). According to Wall and Côté (2007), the environment (parents, peers and coaches) has a significant influence on sport dropout. Syed (2017), suggest that parents that can instil an intrinsic motivation in their child may have them competing and being successful for a long period of time. Parents, players and coaches need to understand that this is a long process and encourage, support and praise their children. This research study indicated that when players receive adequate support the level of performance may enhance. When parents behave disruptively at sport events children will stop playing the sport and quit. This is due to the fact that the sport is no longer fun (Syed, 2017).

5.2 Coaching

It was emphasised that junior golfers need to be able to have fun through the whole process, if this does not happen, discontinuation of the sport is a real possibility. Coaches need to train basic techniques into their players and keep simplicity as a key component. It is essential that the natural ability of a player needs to be maintained and not make large swing changes in order to emulate peers. According to Highfield (2017), players should keep their swings as natural as possible. When players are too concerned with executing the perfect movement it becomes less efficient. Although players want to swing the club perfectly every time, Highfield (2017) argues that this is not possible.

Coaches need to adapt training sessions to simulate scenarios that may occur during competition. If players train in this manner, situations on the golf course will be performed with greater ease. The importance of coaches being a mentor to the player cannot be underestimated. When the coach-player relationship is sufficient, players will be encouraged to work harder. According to Chubby Chandler in Golf Monthly (2017) , a manager to many top European Tour players, the most important aspect is to be personal, loyal and care about your player. He emphasises that a manager needs to be a mentor to a player (Golf Monthly, 2017).

5.3 Specialisation

Before players start playing golf they need to participate in other sport. This study concluded that late specialisation is the correct method of development. Players need to play as many other sporting codes as possible at a young age. Players should develop all their skills and play as many sport as possible (Vardhan *et al.*, 2012, Coyle, 2014). In the South African context, the Long-term Participant Development (LTPD) framework (Vardhan *et al.*, 2012) is an effective route that can be followed in order for children to develop first as athletes and thereafter evolve into golf players. This will greatly benefit them when focussing on golf at a later stage.

During this research study it was found that the benefits of playing other sport are immense. Players develop physical skills needed to be able to perform a sufficient golf swing. Other benefits are that players develop psycho-social skills that will assist them in golf performance and in life after golf. Therefore, by being involved in a team environment players develop methods to deal with success and failure. By playing other sport, players develop the needed speed and balance needed in a golf swing (Coyle, 2014). Picorelli (2016) argues that players develop spatial awareness, body awareness and having control of objects. This will assist them in their golf specific movements. This is in line with findings from Mostafavifar *et al.* (2013) who indicates that apart from physical development, children also develop valuable social skills. Accordingly, Baker *et al.* (2021) suggest that there are advantages in having experience in a variety of sporting codes. DiSanti and Erickson (2019) agree that moving away from the “specialisation is bad” narrative is essential, and that further research is required to achieve a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

The results also revealed evidence that late specialisation is the preferred method of development and as a result indicated that the benefits of late specialisation are countless. Brenner (2016), posits that the increased emphasis on early specialisation has a negative effect on athletes. As such, athletes are pressurised to compete on a high level at such a young age, burnout and injuries may very well be the result.

5.4 Finance

The financial implications of becoming a professional golfer emerged as an important theme during this study. Participants and the accompanying literature confirmed that the process to be successful as a professional golfer is expensive, this barrier proofed to be detrimental to many amateurs. According to Noer (2012) , it will cost a player on the PGA tour \$110 000 to compete for a year. Damron (2015) posits that it will cost \$200 000 per year on the PGA tour. When taking into consideration that there is no definite income each week, that is

frightening. According to Andrew Gunn from the PGA of SA, tour players have a large living expense as they have to pay for travelling and double the accommodation (Retief, 2018).

When players have adequate financial support, it is found that players play with a sense of freedom without pressure present in their subconscious. The financial support from parents can range up to \$15000 per year and may include travel, facilities, equipment and tournament costs (Normand *et al.*, 2017). It was also found that even when golfers reach professional level, it is still difficult for most golfers to carry the financial implications involved. The reason being the additional support needed at a more elite level, such as psychologists, fitness trainers and swing coaches (Farrally *et al.*, 2003).

5.5 Psychology

Participants emphasised the importance of mental abilities of players, this included acceptance, perseverance and confidence. It was also highlighted that these mental aspects need to be practised by players in order to have a positive effect on performance. Acceptance refers to the non-judgemental thought process an athlete goes through and is crucial for sport performance (Bernier *et al.*, 2009). Thomas *et al.* (2017) argue that many players partake in negative self-talk during competition and this may have a negative effect on their performance. According to Rotella (2012), acceptance is crucial after a player has played a shot that did not meet the desired outcome. He says that if a player is angry then he is incapable to execute the needed mental pre-shot routine.

According to Jones *et al.* (2007) and Sams (2015) mental attributes play a huge role in the success of a professional golfer. Certain attributes that are needed for elite athletes to perform at a high level are self-belief, dealing with pressure, concentration and determination to succeed (Jones, 2002, Jones *et al.*, 2007). According to Phillips (2013a), the control of emotions during competition is essential to achieve optimal performance. Mental toughness is related to self-confidence, motivation and the ability to maintain and regain focus after distractions (Jones, 2002). When athletes show mental toughness, they are able to manage negative emotions, such as anxiety.

Creating an environment that is as close as possible to a golf course is crucial for improvement. When failure or disappointment occur in competition, players will have the needed mental skills to overcome negative results. The current method of practising for most players appear not to be the most effective. Game Like Training (2017) creates a competitive environment that a player finds himself in, this simulates situations a player may encounter on the golf course. Furthermore, creating pressure situations during practice sessions may enhance the mental state of a player during competition.

Players need to be patient in the process of becoming a professional and also be patient on the golf course. According to Weinman (2016), after Jordan Spieth lost the 2016 Masters in dramatic fashion, he stated that he required more patience. Justin Harding a seven-time winner on the Sunshine Tour says he is more patient on the golf course and he seems to be enjoying it more (Compleat Golfer, 2018).

OSVEA (Observation, Selection, Visualisation, Execution and Acceptance) is a key component that needs to be utilised by players. This enables a player to have something consistent to fall back onto when pressure situations emerge. According to Highfield (2017) from Game Like Training, players may enhance their performance by making use of OSVEA. This is a pre-shot routine process that mentally prepares players for each shot. It is important for a player not to break this process (Highfield, 2017).

5.6 Lifestyle

It was interesting to note that the lifestyle of being a professional golfer is not as glamorous as it seems. This study indicated that travel and being away from family has a negative effect on the performance of players. Many individuals describe this as a real reason for failure. According to Bamberger (2018), PGA tour players have more pressure at home than the public may think. Usually, these professional golfers have young families and consider their time on the road as work. When these athletes return home after a week of work, their counterparts consider this as their time off. The professional golfers now have to do the duties of a parent and they relish that. This is also where the players have time off and definitely would not like to have conversations about golf. Being homesick and lonely are common feelings among PGA tour players (Noer, 2012). Jeremy Elliot an agent of PGA tour players says that it is a tough lifestyle (Noer, 2012). Ben Martin (PGA tour player) noted in 2011 that he spends approximately 27 weeks a year away from home, in certain cases up to a month at a time. Many players have families and they spend their time alone on the road (Noer, 2012). According to Ben Martin, the stress of travel was wearing on him (Noer, 2012). Individuals pursuing to become a professional golfer need to be aware of the loneliness of professional golfers and the commitment that needs to be made. Players need to be willing to set aside a social life and be totally committed to the process of becoming better. Junior golfers need to practice many hours and put in the hard work to be successful (Ryan, 2016, Rose, 2018). According to Ryan (2016), a player who is devoted and makes compromises, who can spend hours practising effectively without getting bored may very well be successful.

5.7 Branding

Players, as well as coaches, need to be more knowledgeable on the concept of personal branding. If coaches and players understand this, many opportunities may emerge that will enhance performance strategies. Chubby Chandler, an agent too many top players on professional tours, explains in a well-known magazine *Golf Monthly* (2017), that each player is different. He says that players need to be something identifiable. In saying that he emphasises that players need to stay true to themselves and not attempt to be somebody they are not (*Golf Monthly*, 2017). According to Adler (2013), it is important when you are a rookie to start creating an image for yourself.

As identified earlier, the financial strain to become a professional golfer is immense. Therefore, players need to be able to develop an income stream to assist them in costs like tournament fees, travel, equipment and the coaching staff. This study indicated that in order for players to gain sponsorships and solve the financial implications involved, a personal brand needs to be developed by players and managers. Managers need to be aware of methods to attract stakeholders and gain the needed financial aid to be able to pursue a career as a professional athlete. Many participants argued that a player first needs to be successful in order for them to receive a sponsorship of some kind, this is confirmed by Hodge and Walker (2015). Players need to develop relationships with people and differentiate themselves from others (Hodge *et al.*, 2015). As such, players are required to build their brand by creating awareness among various stakeholders (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002).

6. CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to integrate the available theoretical models and the empirical data obtained from the interviews to develop a comprehensive transition framework for junior golfers in the South African context. The aim was achieved and a developmental framework for golf players could be generated. Figure 1 on the next page outline the Professional Golfer Development Framework (PGDF). This framework indicates the various aspects that need to be in place in order for players to reach professional level and be successful.

The number of themes that were identified, along with the richness of data proved that this is a subject that needed attention. The enthusiasm shown by the participants indicated the mutual belief that players need assistance to pursue a career as a professional golfer. When discussing certain aspects, during the interviews, participants reflected on their own experience and tried to make sense of it. The optimisation of all the listed psycho-social factors in the PGDF (Figure 1) that will contribute to the effective transition process is

dependent on the quality of managing the transition process. All the role players such as the coach, medical team, parents and other important role players can contribute to the success of managing the transition process. However, a professional sport manager that is fully qualified in all the important areas of Sport Science can significantly improve the managing of this transition process.

Figure 1: The Professional Golfer Development Framework (PGDF)



Source: Roos (2018)

Limitations of the study include the uneven distribution of the different types of participants (teaching professionals, administrators and players). Furthermore, most of the sample selection was males, with only one female participant. Gender differences could provide additional insights. Future research should consider additional data gathering techniques like

focus groups and surveys. The PGDF can be used as a guideline to further investigate the impact of each of the factors on the effective transition and development of professional golfers. The relationship between players and coaches emerged as a possible additional factor and could be investigated in more detail.

The aim of the study was to develop a framework that could be utilised by golf academies, coaches, parents and players to effectively manage a player's career to professional level and be successful. The number of themes that were identified, along with the richness of data confirmed that this is a subject that needed attention. The enthusiasm shown by the participants indicated the mutual belief that players need assistance to pursue a career as a professional golfer. The research study confirmed through the application of an ecological approach that a holistic view on player development is needed.

The results of the study may provide more insight for programmes to help junior golf players achieve greater success in the professional sport. A better understanding about this endeavour will enable more junior golf players to succeed in their transition. Consequently, increasing the chances of even more South African junior golf players to reach professional level.

REFERENCES

- Adams, Q., Collair, L., Oswald, M. & Perold, M. 2004. Research in educational psychology in South Africa. In: Ebersöhn, L. & Eloff, I. (eds.) Keys to educational psychology. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press. pp. 353.
- Adcroft, A. & Teckman, J. 2009. Taking sport seriously. *Management Decision*, 47(1):5-13. [<https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740910929669>].
- Adler, M. 2013. Introducing the undercover pro: a few things about entourages (and how much they're paid). [Internet: <https://www.golfdigest.com/story/undercover-pro-tour-life>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Arnold Palmer Enterprises 2018. Biography. [Internet: <https://www.arnoldpalmer.com/bio>; downloaded on 26 October 2018].
- Baker, J., Mosher, A. & Fraser-Thomas, J. 2021. Is it too early to condemn early sport specialisation? *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 55(3):179-180. [<https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2020-102053>].
- Bamberger, M. 2018. The lifestyle of the modern pro is at once glamorous, monotonous, invigorating and exhausting. [Internet: <https://www.golf.com/tour-news/2018/01/02/modern-pro-life>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Bernier, M., Thienot, E., Codron, R. & Fournier, J.F. 2009. Mindfulness and acceptance approaches in sport performance. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 3(4):320-333. [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/jcsp.3.4.320>].
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2):77-101. [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>].
- Brenner, J.S. 2016. Sports specialization and intensive training in young athletes. *Pediatrics*, 138(3). [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-2148>].

- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1977. Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7):513. [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513>].
- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1986. Ecology of the family as a context for human development: research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6):723-742. [<https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.22.6.723>].
- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1999. Environments in developmental perspective: theoretical and operational models. In: Friedman, S.L. & Wachs, T.D. (eds.) *Measuring environment across the life span: emerging methods and concepts*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. pp. 3-28.
- Burr, V. 2015. *Social constructionism*. 3rd Hove, UK: Routledge.
- Chadwick, S. 2009. From outside lane to inside track: sport management research in the twenty-first century. *Management Decision*, 47(1):191-203. [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00251740910929786>].
- Compleat Golfer 2018. Justin Harding: committed to success. [Internet: <http://www.compleatgolfer.com/2018/07/30/justin-harding-committed-success/>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. 2015. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. 4th ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Coutinho, P., Mesquita, I. & Fonseca, A.M. 2016. Talent development in sport: a critical review of pathways to expert performance. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 11(2):279-293. [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1747954116637499>].
- Coyle, D. 2014. Hey parents: quit raising specialists and start raising omnivores. [Internet: <http://thetalentcode.com/2014/02/06/hey-parents-quit-raising-specialists-and-start-raising-omnivores/>; downloaded on 21 February 2017].
- Damron, R. 2015. The inside word on what life is like as a professional golfer. [Internet: <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/sport/golf/the-inside-word-on-what-life-is-like-as-a-professional-golfer/news-story/a46a7868c0a7aafb1a2757cc07866eec>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Disanti, J.S. & Erickson, K. 2019. Youth sport specialization: a multidisciplinary scoping systematic review. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 37(18):2094-2105.
- Drakulevski, L., Nakov, L. & Iliev, F. 2014. Sports management and opportunities for professional development. *Research in Physical Education, Sport and Health* 3(1):125-132. [Internet: <http://nwulib.nwu.ac.za/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=97296878&site=eds-live>; downloaded on 25 February 2017].
- Ellis, T. 2016. *First team schoolboy rugby players' understanding of their future career trajectories*. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Stellenbosch University.
- Farrally, M., Cochran, A., Crews, D., Hurdzan, M., Price, R., Snow, J. & Thomas, P. 2003. Golf science research at the beginning of the twenty-first century. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 21(9):753-765. [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0264041031000102123>].
- Game Like Training 2017. The power of the environment. [Internet: <https://www.gltgolf.com/about-glt/glt-golf-philosophy.html>; downloaded on 24 September 2018].
- Golf Monthly 2017. Chubby Chandler: the money maker. [Internet: <https://www.golf-monthly.co.uk/features/the-game/chubby-chandler-money-maker-138924>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Gordin, R. 2016. My consulting life on the PGA tour. In: Schinke, R. J. & Hackfort, D. (eds.) *Psychology in professional sports and the performing arts: Challenges and strategies*. Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge. pp. 93-101. [Internet: <https://books.google.co.za/books?hl=en&lr=&id=n-LDAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Psychology+in+Professional+Sports+and+the+Performing+Arts:+Challenges+and+Strategies&ots=-O79whrZgt&sig=euQfMCMDk8QTgfm2N9->

- [AF49leLQ#v=onepage&q=Psychology%20in%20Professional%20Sports%20and%20the%20Performing%20Arts%3A%20Challenges%20and%20Strategies&f=false](#) ; downloaded on 2 October 2018].
- Gunn, A. 2012. About the PGA of South Africa. [Internet: <http://www.pga.co.za/index.php>; downloaded on 9 January 2017].
- Hansen, M. 2014. More sports + better development. [Internet: http://www.mytpi.com/articles/juniors/more_sports_better_development; downloaded on 20 February 2017].
- Hayman, R.J., Borkoles, E., Taylor, J.A., Hemmings, B. & Polman, R.C. 2014. From pre-elite to elite: the pathway travelled by adolescent golfers. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 9(4):959-974. [<https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.9.4.959>].
- Henriksen, K., Stambulova, N. & Roessler, K.K. 2010. Holistic approach to athletic talent development environments: a successful sailing milieu. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 11(3):212-222.
- Highfield, I. 2017. OSVEA: practical ways to learn golf's mental game. United States of America: Game Like Training.
- Hodge, C. & Walker, M. 2015. Personal branding: a perspective from the professional athlete-level-of-analysis. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 16(1-2):112-131. [<https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2015.074920>].
- Hoeffler, S. & Keller, K.L. 2002. Building brand equity through corporate societal marketing. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 21(1):78-89.
- Human, M. 2015. *An interpretive phenomenological analysis of cricket coaches' experience of a Mindfulness-acceptance-commitment (MAC) approach to coaching*. Thesis: PhD (University of Pretoria).
- Jones, G. 2002. What is this thing called mental toughness? an investigation of elite sport performers. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 14(3):205-218. [<https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200290103509>].
- Jones, G., Hanton, S. & Connaughton, D. 2007. A framework of mental toughness in the world's best performers. *The Sport Psychologist*, 21(2):243-264. [<https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.21.2.243>].
- Jones, I. 2015. *Research methods for sport studies*. 3rd ed. Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jorlén, D. 2008. *Career transitions for Swedish golf juniors: from junior to senior sport*. Unpublished masters dissertation, Malmö University Electronic Publishing
- Ko, Y.J. 2013. Sport management and marketing: overview and recommendation for future research. *International Journal of Sport Science*, 9(33):205-207. [<https://doi.org/10.5232/ricyde2013.033>].
- Krebs, R.J. 2009. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development and the process of development of sports talent. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 40(1):108.
- Larsen, C., Alfermann, D. & Christensen, M. 2012. Psychosocial skills in a youth soccer academy: a holistic ecological perspective. *Sport Science Review*, 21(3-4):51-74. [<https://doi.org/10.2478/v10237-012-0010>].
- Malina, R.M. 2010. Early sport specialization: roots, effectiveness, risks. *Current Sports Medicine Reports*, 9(6):364-371. [<https://doi.org/10.1249/JSR.0b013e3181fe3166>].
- Moll, T., Rees, T. & Freeman, P. 2017. Enacted support and golf-putting performance: the role of support type and support visibility. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 30:30-37. [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.01.007>].
- Mostafavifar, A.M., Best, T.M. & Myer, G.D. 2013. *Early sport specialisation, does it lead to long-term problems?* BMJ Publishing Group Ltd and British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine.
- Noer, M. 2012. On the edge: money, life and loneliness on the fringe of the PGA tour. [Internet: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnoer/2012/02/08/ben-martin-pga-tour/#58949ffa1d27>; downloaded on 30 September 2018].

- Normand, J.M., Wolfe, A. & Peak, K. 2017. A review of early sport specialization in relation to the development of a young athlete. *International journal of kinesiology and sports science*, 5(2):37-42.
- Phillips, D. 2013a. Controlling your emotions. [Internet: http://www.mytpi.com/articles/swing/controlling_your_emotions; downloaded on 6 June 2017 2017].
- Phillips, D. 2013b. Does early specialization insure success in golf? [Internet: http://www.mytpi.com/articles/juniors/does_early_specialization_insure_success_in_golf; downloaded on 20 February 2017].
- Picorelli, R. 2016. Physical education as a solid foundation for junior golf. [Internet: http://www.mytpi.com/articles/juniors/physical_education_as_a_solid_foundation_for_junior_golf; downloaded on 20 February 2017].
- Retief, D. 2018. So you want to be a pro? [Internet: <https://www.iol.co.za/personal-finance/so-you-want-to-be-a-pro-12652161>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Roos, F. & Surujlal, J. 2014. Video analysis in golf coaching: an insider perspective. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5(21):399-404. [<https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n21p399>].
- Roos, S.J. 2018. *Managing golf players' transition from junior to professional level*. Dissertation - MA, University of Pretoria
- Rose, M.L. 2018. The life of a pro golfer. [Internet: <https://golftips.golfweek.com/life-pro-golfer-20669.html>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Rotella, B. 2012. *Golf is not a game of perfect*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Ryan, S. 2016. The 5 qualities every tour pro shares. [Internet: <https://www.golf.com/tour-and-news/5-characteristics-shared-every-successful-tour-pro>; downloaded on 3 October 2018].
- Sams, L.D. 2015. *Perceptual differences in children learning to play golf with traditional or modified (scaled) equipment*.
- Stewart, B., Nicholson, M., Smith, A.C. & Hoyer, R. 2018. *Sport management: principles and applications*, Oxford, United Kingdom: Elsevier.
- Syed, M. 2017. Dilemma of pushy tennis parents. *The Times & The Sunday Times*.
- Terre Blanche, M. & Durrheim, K. 2006. Research design. In: Terre blanche, M., Durrheim, K. & Painter, D. (eds.) *Research in Practice*. 2nd ed. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press. pp. 1-17
- Thomas, P.R., Furst, A.J. & Fogarty, G.J. 2017. Individual differences in cognitive processes and golf performance. *Routledge International Handbook of Golf Science*. Routledge. pp. 268-278
- Vardhan, D., Balyi, I. & Duffy, P. 2012. SA-sport-for-life-long-term-participant-development. In: (SASCOC), S. A. S. C. A. O. C. (ed.). *Oaklands Road, Melrose, Gauteng, South Africa: SASCOC*.
- Visser, M. 2007. The social ecological model as theoretical framework in community psychology. In: Duncan, N., Bowman, B., Naidoo, A., Pillay, J. & Roos, V. (eds.) *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action*. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press. pp. 102-437 [Internet: <https://books.google.co.za/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ZqiqjBtLsbAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA102&dq=The+social+ecological+model+as+theoretical+framework+in+community+psychology&ots=1NrA3fKfHc&sig=oDB-h2xkcWznZ91VpNMU62RkJrc#v=onepage&q=The%20social%20ecological%20model%20as%20theoretical%20framework%20in%20community%20psychology&f=false>; downloaded on 28 September 2018].
- Wall, M. & Côté, J. 2007. Developmental activities that lead to dropout and investment in sport. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 12(1):77-87.
- Weinman, S. 2016. Five ways losing is good for your golf. [Internet: <https://www.golfdigest.com/story/five-ways-losing-is-good-for-your-golf>; downloaded on 4 October 2018 2018].