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The psychology of Gaelic games: a co-produced scoping review to inform research, policy, and practice

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ABSTRACT

Gaelic games are a family of indigenous Irish sports played in Ireland and across the world. With recent growth in research on the psychology of Gaelic games and developments in sport science policy in this context, there is a need to map and clarify understanding of psychology in Gaelic games. Against this backdrop, we conducted a scoping review that aimed to identify and synthesise current literature on the psychology of Gaelic games, with the intention of generating findings that could have implications for research, policy, and practice. After electronic database searches and manual searches up to September 2023, we included data from 42 articles involving 4963 Gaelic games participants in the review. We organised findings into eight categories: *mental health and wellbeing; burnout; youth coaching practices; psychology of injury; attentional processes; optimal experiences and performing under pressure; identity; and female coach development*. In light of the findings, we offer (a) five recommendations for researchers to strengthen the quality of research in future, and (b) five implications for policy and practice, some of which might also be transferable to other sport contexts. We believe that consideration of our recommendations for research can build a stronger and more coherent evidence base for policy and practice. By doing so, this can ultimately lead to more meaningful and tangible benefits for all in Gaelic games.

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Camogie; coaching; Gaelic football; hurling; sport

The indigenous Irish sports of Gaelic games have been a key social, cultural, historical, and political thread in the fabric of Irish society for over a century. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is Ireland's most influential cultural and sporting organisation and is recognised as one of the world's greatest amateur sporting organisations (McArdle, 2016). The GAA governs the sports of men's hurling and Gaelic football, as well as handball

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and rounders, whereas camogie (i.e., women's equivalent of men's hurling) and ladies Gaelic football are governed by the Camogie Association and the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, respectively. Together, these national governing bodies generate annual revenue of over €100 million (Meyler et al., 2023) and the senior All-Ireland finals, the pinnacle competitions in Gaelic games, can attract attendances in excess of 82,300 spectators. Gaelic games have a community-driven, volunteer ethos, with the sports played in over 2000 clubs across all 32 counties in Ireland. Additionally, Gaelic games are played internationally, with over 450 clubs spread across Great Britain, North and South America, mainland Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Australasia (GAA, 2023b). Competitions are organised at non-elite club (i.e., community) and elite, inter-county (i.e., regional) levels for youths and adults.

The Gaelic games player pathway outlines three player development phases: foundation; talent; and elite/high performance (GAA, 2022a). The focus of the foundation stage is to promote participation at club level and to nurture an active lifestyle and life-long commitment to Gaelic games. The talent and elite/high performance pathways aim to help players reach their playing potential and achieve excellence at inter-county level (GAA, 2022a). The pathway to becoming an adult inter-county player starts with developmental opportunities through a county's talent academy in early-to-mid adolescence, before a player transitions onto their county team to compete in inter-county competitions in late-adolescence (e.g., under-16 for girls and under-17 for boys) and early adulthood (i.e., under-20 for men). Although abiding by amateur ideals, inter-county Gaelic games players engage in training and playing loads similar to professional athletes (Boyle et al., 2023) and have been described as "professional in most respects except the capacity for rest" (Moran, 2001, p. 280). Despite it being common for inter-county players to hold full-time jobs or be full-time students, these players commit significant time to their chosen sport(s), often dedicating more than 30 hours weekly to training and associated travel and preparation (Kelly et al., 2019). Illustrative of the growing professionalism of Gaelic games, most inter-county players have access to sport science support (Gaelic Players Association [GPA], 2023a, 2023b). These players also receive government funding to recognise their contribution to Irish society and to support their development as high-performance athletes. Consequently, with the elite performance pathway, competition structures, and support provision for elite players in Gaelic games, these sports are arguably comparable to professional sports nationally and internationally, despite their amateur ethos.

In 2020, the Gaelic Games Sport Science Working Group (GGSSWG) was established to support the delivery of sport science across all stages of the player pathway. The GGSSWG has since produced a framework for sports science in Gaelic games across the disciplines of athletic development, nutrition, skill acquisition, performance analysis, physiotherapy and rehabilitation, and sport psychology (Lane et al., 2023). For each discipline, the framework outlines the type of content and mode of delivery relevant to the various stages of the player pathway, with a view to optimising participation, health, and performance among players (GAA, 2022a). This detail was evidence-informed through (a) relevant research from Gaelic games and other sports and (b) discipline-specific professional experience of groups of sport science specialists, including practitioners, academics, and researchers.

Sport psychology has been used in Gaelic games since at least the 1990s (MacIntyre et al., 1998), yet the evidence base on the psychology of Gaelic games has been slow to develop. Early reviews of “science” in Gaelic games (Reilly & Collins, 2008; Reilly & Doran, 2001) highlighted a need for further development of the psychology literature. Since then, a growing and broad evidence base on the psychology of Gaelic games has accumulated, with researchers investigating psychological aspects that span areas such as skill development (e.g., Coughlan et al., 2014), mental health (e.g., Brick et al., 2022;), coaching (O’Brien et al., 2023), and youth participation (e.g., Sheridan et al., 2020). Within this literature, some researchers have highlighted how the culture, structure, and context of Gaelic games influences participants. For example, Geary et al. (2022) illustrated how the cultural backdrop (e.g., amateur status, commitment to club) and increasing professionalism of Gaelic games was expressed in the athletic identities of elite male players. Other researchers have suggested that Gaelic games players could also be impacted by the limited “off-season”, due to overlaps between club and inter-county seasons (Turner & Moore, 2016), and that the demands on student-athletes who are inter-county players could be magnified, as these individuals could be juggling their studies with playing for their club, university, and county teams (Sheehan et al., 2018).

With the recent growth in academic research on the psychology of Gaelic games and proposals concerning the delivery of sport science (Lane et al., 2023), it seems timely and valuable to review this literature. Previously, researchers have reviewed literature on nutrition (Beasley, 2015), injury (Dekkers et al., 2022), “science” (Reilly & Doran, 2001), and “applied sport science” (Boyle et al., 2023) in Gaelic football, as well as “science” in Gaelic football and hurling (Reilly & Collins, 2008). While informative, these reviews offer little insight into psychology in Gaelic games. Research from other sports could potentially be useful in Gaelic games, but without consideration of cultural and contextual nuances, it might be hard for players, coaches, and sport psychology practitioners in this context to draw upon and apply research knowledge from other sports and cultures.

Therefore, to inform research, policy, and practice, we aimed to identify and synthesise current literature on the psychology of Gaelic games. As the first synthesis of research on the psychology of Gaelic games, we conducted a scoping review, a methodology that offers a systematic way to synthesise existing literature in a research area, establish key trends, and identify gaps for future research (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Daudt et al., 2013; Tricco et al., 2018). Whereas systematic reviews have a narrow focus, scoping reviews start with a broad research question that allows exploration of an evidence base (Sabiston et al., 2022). Accordingly, our review was guided by the following question: *what published knowledge exists about psychology in Gaelic games?* In addressing the overarching aim and research question of our review, we sought to answer four specific research questions: (a) what are the characteristics of studies conducted on psychology in Gaelic games?; (b) what topics have been studied on the psychology of Gaelic games?; (c) what are the findings from studies conducted on psychology in Gaelic games?; and (d) what are the implications of the findings for research, policy, and practice? By addressing these questions and mapping existing research, this could offer insights into cultural and contextual aspects of Gaelic games and thus address wider calls for consideration of culture and context in sport psychology (Schinke & Stambulova, 2016). Related to this point, the findings could also have implications for other sport contexts. For instance, the findings could be relevant to sports that: have a strong

community-based and volunteer ethos; have a developmental pathway; involve student-athletes and/or dual-career athletes; and maintain an amateur ethos yet have high-performance environments increasingly characterised by professional-like levels of structure, demands, resources, and expectations.

Method

Review protocol

For this systematic scoping review, we adopted Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) 5-step framework for scoping reviews, as well as recommendations for enhancing this framework (Levac et al., 2010) and reporting scoping reviews (PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews – PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018; see Supplementary File 1). Prior to the commencement of formal searches, we developed a scoping review protocol and deposited this on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/4wsfz/>). Due to the exploratory nature of our scoping review and our interest in synthesising the breadth of psychological research conducted in Gaelic games to date, we included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method studies.

Co-production and the researchers

Although Arksey and O'Malley (2005) labelled expert consultation as optional for scoping reviews, others have suggested it is essential (Daudt et al., 2013; Sabiston et al., 2022). In designing, conducting, and reporting our review, we adopted a co-produced approach (Pollock et al., 2022) and, more specifically, drew on principles for equitable and experientially-informed co-produced research (Smith et al., 2023). Before describing the co-production process, we offer a brief summary of our positions as a research team to provide context as to how these different backgrounds shaped our review. The first author was a sport psychology researcher and practitioner, with extensive experience in Gaelic games as a player, coach, and administrator. The second author was a former Gaelic games player and the chairperson of the GGSSWG since its formation in 2020, while the fourth author was the lead of the GGSSWG's Sport Psychology sub-group and had previously worked in Gaelic games as an accredited sport psychology practitioner. Therefore, the first, second, and fourth authors, all of whom were White-Irish females, could be regarded as having varying degrees of cultural and experiential "insider-ness" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) in Gaelic games. These backgrounds were beneficial throughout the project, as they helped us to: be sensitive to the contextual nuances of Gaelic games (e.g., amateur status, multiple national governing bodies) and the sociocultural contexts in which the sports are situated. The third and fifth authors were White-British, sport psychology researchers and practitioners, but neither had Gaelic games experience and could be regarded as cultural "outsiders" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Despite this, the outsider perspective brought by these authors added to the study, as they encouraged us to reflect collectively on the broader meaning of the findings for the academic and applied field of sport psychology, and other sport contexts, nationally and internationally.

Collaborating with individuals with lived experience through co-producing research holds a multitude of potential benefits, including that it helps to recognise the value

and utility of experiential knowledge, can enhance the quality of research, and can enable the development of impactful research that is connected to people's priorities and needs (Smith et al., 2023). The idea for the co-produced scoping review built on over 12 months of engagement between the first, second, fourth, and fifth authors, through which a need to synthesise published research on the psychology of Gaelic games was identified, to inform research, policy, and practice. Given their positions in the GGSSWG, the second and fourth authors were partners in our research and their involvement enhanced our study as it enabled us to: integrate knowledge that might not (yet) have permeated the academic literature; interpret our findings in light of existing initiatives in Gaelic games (e.g., sport science framework) and contemporary priorities (e.g., gender equity); and draw on different ideas on how the findings could inform research, policy and practice. Consistent with recommended practice (Pollock et al., 2022) and our commitment to equitable participation (Smith et al., 2023), the second and fourth authors were involved in all stages, helping us to: develop our aim, research questions, and methods; interpret findings; establish implications for research, policy, and practice; and write up our review.

Eligibility criteria

For the purpose of our review, we included a study if it: (a) was a primary study published at any time in a peer-reviewed journal; (b) presented data on at least one psychological component; and (c) sampled players, coaches, support personnel (e.g., sport psychology practitioners, sport scientists), officials, or parents in Gaelic games (i.e., Gaelic football, ladies Gaelic football, camogie, hurling, rounders, and handball). For multi-sport studies that included Gaelic games participants, we included a study if data for Gaelic games participants were presented separately (i.e., qualitative or numeric data specific to Gaelic games participants could be extracted). We excluded studies if they: (a) focused on handball or rounders outside of Gaelic games; (b) did not report data on psychology; (c) merged data for Gaelic games participants with other samples (e.g., from other sports) and findings specific to Gaelic games participants could not be extrapolated; or (d) did not contain original data.

Information sources

We employed three strategies to source relevant studies on four occasions (March 2023-September 2023), with the most recent searches undertaken on 1 September 2023. First, we conducted systematic searches of four electronic databases (PsycINFO, MEDLINE, PubMed, and SPORTDiscus). The first author developed the search strategy in consultation with the other authors following initial pilot searches in February 2023. Similar to previous sport-specific reviews in psychology (e.g., Jackman, Hawkins et al., 2020), we used a block of Boolean terms to capture the sports of Gaelic games and another for psychology. Accordingly, the two blocks were: (a) "Gaelic games" OR "Gaelic football" OR "hurling" OR "camogie" OR ("Gaelic games" AND "rounders") OR ("Gaelic games" AND "handball") AND (b) "psycholog*" OR "mental". We searched both blocks at the full-text level and adapted the search string to each database as necessary (see Supplementary File 2 for each electronic database search). No limits were placed on language or publication date. Second, the first author searched over 20 journals relevant to sport

psychology, sport science, or the Irish context (see Supplementary File 2 for list) using key terms. Third, we also identified additional records through manual screening of the reference lists and forward citations (Google Scholar) for studies included in the review. All records identified were exported to EndNote X9 and duplicates were removed through the automatic de-duplication feature and manual screening.

Study selection

The first and fifth authors screened each record independently at the title and abstract stage, with the authors subsequently meeting to discuss their decisions and resolve any discrepancies. The same authors screened full texts of the remaining records independently against the eligibility criteria. After doing so, we met to discuss our decisions, resolved any discrepancies, and agreed reasons for excluding articles. We reached an almost-perfect level of agreement ($\kappa \geq .94$) at both stages.

Data charting

Following discussions as a research team, we collectively developed a data-charting table to facilitate the extraction of relevant information. In line with this, we extracted information on each study's: author(s); publication year; objective(s); design; sample characteristics; outcomes examined; and key findings. To aid familiarisation, the first author read all of the included studies repeatedly, before extracting relevant data from each article. The third author also read the included studies and verified the accuracy of data (Tricco et al., 2018) extracted by the first author. Following this check, we reached consensual agreement on all information.

Collating, summarising, and reporting findings

In synthesising findings from included studies, we were guided by recommendations proposed for the reporting of scoping reviews (Levac et al., 2010). As the central purpose of our review was to establish what research exists on the psychology of Gaelic games, we adopted a data-based convergent synthesis approach, as this method enables the integration of data from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies via a single analytic approach (Hong et al., 2017). To collate and summarise relevant findings, we undertook a content analysis as this method is flexible and can be used to analyse quantitative or qualitative data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Following multiple readings of each article and the extraction of key findings through the data-charting process, the first author coded data pertaining to our research questions using an inductive approach, which involved both semantic (i.e., explicit meanings) and latent (i.e., underlying assumptions and understandings) forms of interpretation. To enable the synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data, we transformed quantitative data into qualitative codes through the process of "qualitizing" (Pope et al., 2007). For example, the code "mood" included quantitative findings for this concept. After this process of coding, the first author then grouped similar codes into more substantive categories. To give an example, findings for "mood", "stress", and "depression" were clustered into the overarching category, "mental health and wellbeing". For the purpose of the review, we only reported a

category in our findings if at least three studies offered findings related to a topic. The first author then represented her initial interpretations in a narrative format in accordance with our research questions, shared this with the other authors, asked them to review and appraise the interpretations, and invited them to provide feedback as “critical friends” (Smith & McGannon, 2018). In this stage, our unique positions towards the research offered different lenses that enriched our interpretations. For example, the second author encouraged greater focus on the gender, performance standard, and age of participants to enable links to be made between the findings and policy (e.g., player pathway – GAA, 2022a). After editing and refining the write up of findings, a process that further evolved following feedback during the peer review process and from relevant knowledge users (e.g., coaches, players, sport psychology practitioners and trainees, administrators), we considered the overall meaning of the results in relation to our research aim and identified implications for research, policy, and practice (Levac et al., 2010).

Quality appraisal

Although scoping reviews typically do not involve a quality appraisal (e.g., Sabiston et al., 2022), we assessed the quality of included studies as we sought to produce findings that could inform future research, policy, and practice. As quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method studies were eligible, we used the mixed methods appraisal tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018). The MMAT provides criteria for five types of study design: qualitative research; quantitative randomised controlled trials; quantitative non-randomised studies; quantitative descriptive studies; and mixed methods studies. For each type of study design, five criteria are presented and the assessors are required to determine whether each individual criterion has been satisfied using one of three responses: *yes*, *no*, or *can't tell*. Hong et al. (2018) advise against the computation of an overall quality score. The first and fifth authors appraised the quality of all studies against the relevant criteria independently. One article (Jackman, Crust, & Swann, 2020) was assessed by the third and fifth authors to circumvent a potential conflict of interest. After deciding on their individual quality ratings, the authors met to discuss their decisions. We achieved an almost-perfect level of agreement ($\kappa = .82$) and resolved all discrepancies through discussion.

Findings

After screening articles at the title and abstract stage, and at the full-text stage, we included 42 articles and 36 independent samples in the review (see Figure 1). Data from larger research projects on addictive behaviours (MacGearailt et al., 2023; Murray et al., 2022; Turk et al., 2023), burnout (Woods et al., 2022, 2023), and an intervention to reduce alcohol consumption (Darker et al., 2013; O'Farrell et al., 2010, 2018) were derived from the same initial sample and were thus considered independent samples, while Schweickle et al. (2021, 2022) reported data for the same participant in two separate articles. The most common reason for exclusion was that Gaelic games participants were mixed with ineligible participants ($k = 25$) and their data could not be interpreted separately (see Supplementary File 3 for excluded texts and primary reasons). Four studies

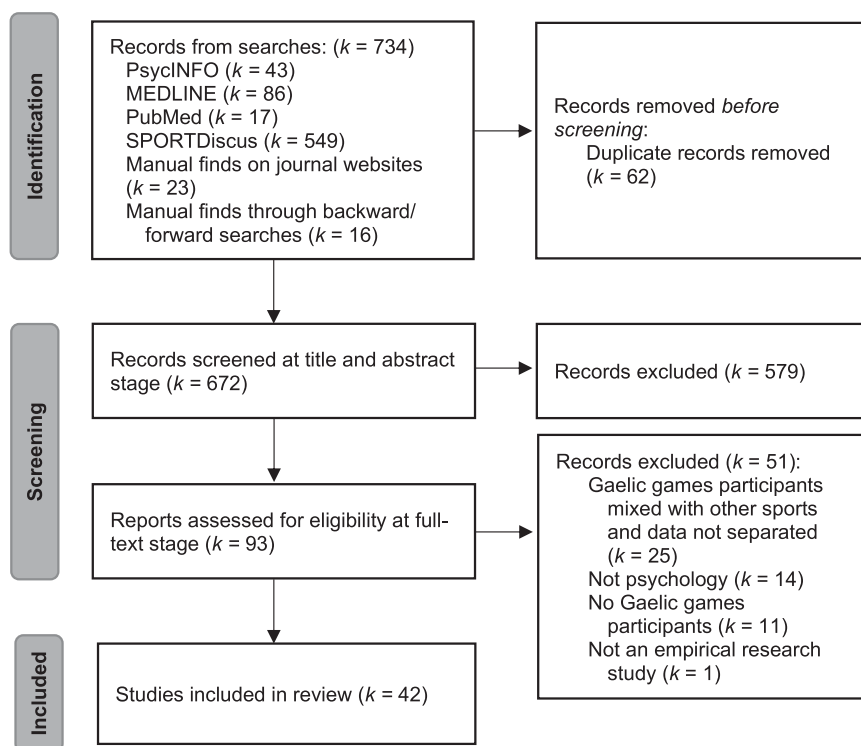


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the identification and screening process.

reported data for Gaelic games participants as part of multi-sport samples (Jackman, Crust, & Swann, 2020; Schweickle et al., 2021, 2022; Tamminen et al., 2022), whereas the other 38 studies only included Gaelic games participants. In line with our research questions, we detail the study characteristics, topics of interest, and key findings on the psychology of Gaelic games via a narrative synthesis in the following sections. Data extracted for each study are presented in Supplementary File 4.

Study characteristics

Study design

Of the 42 studies, most adopted quantitative methods ($k = 25$; 59.52%), with qualitative ($k = 15$) and mixed methods ($k = 2$) used less frequently. The most common quantitative approaches were experimental ($k = 10$) and cross-sectional questionnaire studies ($k = 9$), followed by longitudinal ($k = 3$) and prospective cohort ($k = 3$) studies using questionnaires. The qualitative studies mainly used interviews ($k = 7$) or focus groups ($k = 6$), with one study analysing responses to a single, open-ended question as part of a larger questionnaire (MacGearailt et al., 2023) and another using a “self-study” method involving various reflection techniques (O’Dwyer & Bowles, 2021). Mixed-method studies combined psychometric inventories with interviews (Geary et al., 2022) or open-ended survey questions (Woods et al., 2022).

Sample characteristics

The total sample ($N=4963$) comprised 4134 players, 438 referees, 358 coaches, 22 parents, seven sport science personnel, and four administrators. Most of the 36 independent samples recruited players ($k=26$), with the remainder recruiting: coaches ($k=5$); players, coaches, and other support personnel ($k=2$); coaches and players ($k=2$); and referees ($k=1$). Most player samples recruited were adults ($k=18$; $n=2160$) rather than youths (i.e., under 18; $k=9$; $n=951$), or combined adult and youth players ($k=3$; $n=1023$). Conversely, most coaches recruited were involved in youth Gaelic games. A clear gender imbalance was evident, with most participants being male rather than female (players = 80.50% vs. 19.50%; coaches/management for whom gender was reported = 79.65% vs. 20.35%; referees = 99.09% vs. 0.91%). The gender gap for players was greatest in youths, with females representing only 14.62% of players in youth-specific studies. Eighteen independent, Gaelic-games-only player samples consisted solely of males, whereas only one study recruited a female-only player-sample (Farmer et al., 2020). Of the 2990 players for whom the Gaelic games sport was specified, most played men's Gaelic football (61.30%), followed by ladies Gaelic football (15.48%), hurling (9.83%), and camogie (2.71%). The remaining 10.68% played men's Gaelic football and hurling (i.e., they were "dual players").

Quality appraisal

Based on the MMAT criteria (Hong et al., 2018), we identified a quality issue with 33.33% of studies (see Supplementary File 5 for the quality appraisal). Common issues for quantitative studies included missing data or a lack of clarity about randomisation in experimental studies, while the reporting of methods was limited in some qualitative studies. Findings from one study (Hannon & Fitzgerald, 2006) should be treated cautiously due to multiple quality concerns.

Synthesis of findings

Through our analysis, we generated eight categories to represent our findings. Where findings crossed multiple categories (e.g., correlation between two constructs), we included the finding in the category that we felt represented the primary focus of the research. In the case of "mental health and wellbeing", we present our findings in three sub-sections to aid clarity.

Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health in players. Of the 14 studies that produced findings on mental health and/or wellbeing, most focused on players (85.71%). Overall, these studies show that symptoms of mental ill-health are somewhat prevalent. Two or more symptoms of common mental disorders were reported by 48% of male inter-county players (Gouttebarga et al., 2016), while 37% of university student-athletes reported scores indicative of mild-to-moderate depression in week 1 of a 13-week university season (Sheehan et al., 2018). While Sheehan et al. (2018) reported large improvements in mood and depressive symptoms over the season, the authors also found significant reductions in some weeks, which they suggested could be due to game outcomes (i.e., losses), academic commitments (e.g., exams), and negative behaviours (e.g., alcohol consumption). Regarding trait

anxiety, Sheehan et al. (2018) reported a positive relationship with ego motivational climate, but a negative association with task motivational climate and autonomy. Hannon and Fitzgerald (2006) reported significantly higher levels of anxiety among 26 male inter-county players versus a non-athlete sample, but the findings should be interpreted with caution due to quality issues with this study. Although Woods et al. (2022) reported stress levels among players were unchanged between the summer before the Covid-19 pandemic and the same period 12 months later, more than one in four players reported that the suspension period was detrimental for their mental health (Woods et al., 2022). Some studies have also examined links between mental health and behaviours. Biggins et al. (2018) reported that stress and confusion/bewilderment were the only mental health indices that were significantly higher (i.e., no difference in depression, anxiety, stress, coping, or other mood subscales) in elite male players who were “poor sleepers” compared to “good sleepers”. Additionally, Cullen et al. (2021) found that higher scores on a single-item rating scale for mood were positively related to inter-county Gaelic football players’ abilities to generate high-speed running across training and match-play over a full season.

Several studies presented findings related to behaviours that can be classified as addictive disorders, with most evidence gathered on alcohol (mis)use. Almost one in four (23%) elite male players reported levels of adverse alcohol use regarded as indicative of a common mental disorder (Gouttebauge et al., 2016), while others reported that 73% of elite players exhibited adverse alcohol use (Murray et al., 2022) and almost three-quarters of primarily club players reported alcohol use that exceeded low-risk guidelines (O’Farrell et al., 2010). Binge drinking was widely prevalent among elite Gaelic games players (Murray et al., 2022) and players suggested that periods of abstinence from alcohol during the season could increase binge-drinking likelihood in the off-season, though some felt that issues with binge-drinking in elite Gaelic games could also be linked to the age of players and Irish society (MacGearailt et al., 2023). Initial evidence has developed on gambling, with Turk et al. (2023) reporting that 19% of elite players were low-risk gamblers, 11.9% were moderate-risk gamblers, and 6% were problem gamblers.

Mental health in non-player groups. Mental health in Gaelic games has also been studied in non-player groups, but only in single, cross-sectional studies. Brick et al. (2022) reported that 94.29% of referees ($N = 438$) experienced abuse while refereeing, with the frequency of abuse inversely related to mental wellbeing, and positively related to anxiety, depression, and intentions to quit via distress. In youth coaches, Duffy et al. (2021) found that 34% of coaches reported personal experience of a mental health issue. A significant, positive relationship was found between personal experience of mental ill-health and depression literacy, with role breadth and role efficacy positively associated with engagement in promotion, prevention, and early intervention for mental ill-health, but depression literacy was not directly related to these outcomes (Duffy et al., 2021).

Mental health interventions. Three articles offered insights into interventions related to mental health. O’Keeffe et al. (2023) found an online mental health literacy (MHL) intervention significantly increased MHL and attitudes towards seeking mental-health help, and significantly decreased stigma towards seeking professional mental health treatment and self-stigma for seeking help, between time 1 and all other intervention points in elite male and female Gaelic footballers. No significant differences in variables were found in

the control condition across timepoints other than MHL, which decreased significantly over time. An intervention to reduce alcohol misuse and harm delivered to male club players in 2008 was unsuccessful (Darker et al., 2013; O'Farrell et al., 2018) and the findings suggested that the intervention's effectiveness was hampered by low levels of participation in, and acceptability of, the intervention (O'Farrell et al., 2018) and resistance to the introduction of a club alcohol policy (Darker et al., 2013).

Burnout

Researchers have noted that Gaelic games players could be particularly susceptible to burnout due to the intense demands of balancing work, life, and playing Gaelic games (Woods et al., 2020) and the limited rest periods for players (Turner & Moore, 2016), with quantitative and qualitative studies providing insights into burnout. The findings of cross-sectional studies indicated that burnout was inversely associated with sport enjoyment (Woods et al., 2020) and perceived stress, amotivated regulation, and constrained commitment in adult players (Woods et al., 2023), but was not significantly related to male youths' motivational profiles (Langan et al., 2016). Using longitudinal designs, researchers found no significant changes in burnout over eight weeks in male youth inter-county players (Turner & Moore, 2016) or between the summer before the Covid-19 pandemic and the summer after it in adult players (Woods et al., 2022). Several qualitative studies offer different insights into potential contributors to burnout in Gaelic games. Hughes and Hassan (2017) suggested burnout in men's Gaelic football was shaped by the culture and structures of the GAA and that it is exacerbated by power relations, increased professionalism, and compliance with the intense demands expected of players. These findings also resonate in part with the perspectives of a camogie player in a study by Tamminen et al. (2022), who explained how they felt they "always rolled from club into county into university, to county to club to university, and we were always on the go" (p. 868). Illustrating the potential impact that a break from such demands could have, Woods et al. (2022) found that benefits of the Covid-19 suspension period for players included having more free time and getting a break from the demands and commitment of Gaelic games.

Youth coaching practices

Despite the popularity of Gaelic games among Irish youths, dropout is a significant problem in Gaelic games (Hardie Murphy et al., 2017). Five of the six studies presenting evidence related to youth-coach practices examined coach education interventions designed to encourage participation and reduce dropout in youth male ($k=3$) and female ($k=2$) players. Broadly speaking, findings from these studies suggest theoretically-informed psychoeducation for coaches, alongside organising activities that shift the focus away from competition, show promise for promoting participation and positive psychological outcomes. In a non-controlled, 24-week evaluation of the GAA Super Games Centres, at which coaches were educated on how to apply social support principles in modified games (i.e., games with a smaller pitch, ball, and a rule that everyone must play), Lavalley et al. (2019) found that feeling more support was available significantly predicted lower intentions to drop out. Moreover, this relationship was mediated by social identity, suggesting players were less likely to intend to drop out if they perceived more social support to be available, as this made them feel more part of the

social group (Lavallee et al., 2019). In a follow-up qualitative study with players, coaches, and parents, Sheridan et al. (2020) outlined that peer support, friendship, positive coach feedback, autonomy, a non-pressured environment, and competence were considered important for continued participation. Using self-determination theory (SDT) as a guiding framework for an educational intervention, Langan et al. (2015) found increases in need-supportive behaviour among coaches. No significant changes were reported in the motivation of the male adolescent Gaelic footballers these coaches worked with over 12 weeks, but the SDT-based coaching intervention appeared to protect against burnout, as the intervention players did not report the same significant increases in burnout as the control group (Langan et al., 2015). The final two interventions targeted coaches of ladies Gaelic footballers in pre-adolescence (Farmer et al., 2020) and adolescence (O'Brien et al., 2023). Farmer et al. (2020) compared the effects of a traditional Gaelic4Girls (G4G) programme to a G4G programme underpinned by SDT, both of which involved eight coach education sessions and a parent education session. Compared to the other conditions, the SDT-G4G intervention produced significantly more physical activity (PA) and elicited significantly higher increases in PA self-efficacy, perceived physical self-confidence, PA enjoyment, and peer social support versus the control group (Farmer et al., 2020). In a qualitative exploration of eight coaches' experiences of the Gaelic4Teens (G4 T) coach education programme, O'Brien et al. (2023) reported that by adopting an athlete-centred coaching style, the coaches perceived greater autonomy, confidence, and competence among players, and that training had become more fun. Lastly, and echoing some of the themes within the intervention studies, a focus group study revealed that young players were motivated to participate in Gaelic games by coaches who demonstrated transformational leadership and by having opportunities to feel competence and relatedness (Lawler et al., 2021).

Psychology of injury

Injuries in Gaelic games have received some attention in the sports medicine literature (e.g., Dekkers et al., 2022; O'Connor et al., 2022) and we identified five studies that offered insights into the psychology of injury in this context. Together, these findings highlight the importance of considering psychological aspects of injury in Gaelic games and recognising the impact of sociocultural and contextual influences on injured players. Higher fear-avoidance scores were found among players with more severe injuries (O'Connor et al., 2021) and those with higher perceived pain ratings (O'Keeffe et al., 2019). In terms of psychological readiness to return to play, several studies provided insights. O'Connor et al. (2021) revealed that just under 50% of university players who sustained an injury ($N = 226$) might not have been ready psychologically to return to play despite being cleared to play. Revealing differences in how players might navigate injury, some male inter-county footballers reported playing through, and rushing back from, injury to "serve everyone" (p. 849), even if it undermined their wellbeing (Hughes & Hassan, 2017). In contrast, Geary et al. (2022) found that an elite male player, who displayed a strong athletic identity, held a more balanced perspective when faced with an injury layoff, which they suggested might have been due to the player wanting a break from the intense playing commitments. Findings reported by Gouttebauge et al. (2016) also illustrate potential implications of injury for mental health, as elite male players who had a severe injury were significantly more likely to report distress and anxiety/

depression. Continuing on this theme, elite Gaelic football players reported that mental health help-seeking following injury can be facilitated by education, social support, positive rather than stigmatising help-seeking attitudes, and access to appropriate support services (O'Keeffe et al., 2022). O'Keeffe et al. (2022) also presented evidence of gender differences that connect to broader contextual and sociocultural influences. Female players more frequently reported issues with accessibility (e.g., due to expense, not having access to professional support), which is reflective of the gender inequalities in support provision at inter-county level (GPA, 2023b). Conversely, more male players reported that stigma and not feeling professional help was needed as barriers, which some linked to societal stereotypes of males.

Attentional processes

Five studies provided initial insights into attentional processes and skilled performance in male players, albeit with limited cross-study overlap. Through two experimental studies, Coughlan et al. (2014, 2019) showed that key tenets of deliberate practice (DP) theory were generally supported, as DP improved kicking accuracy and was more effortful mentally. In youth and adult inter-county Gaelic footballers, performance did not differ significantly between self-talk (ST) conditions (i.e., instructional or motivational), but was significantly better in the motivational ST condition when players kicked on their dominant foot (Hardy et al., 2015). Lyons et al. (2008) found that third-tier, adult inter-county hurling players showed significantly better coincidence anticipation than third-tier club players in a task involving the “pull” swing at multiple exercise intensities (Lyons et al., 2008). Finally, in the only qualitative study on attention, McLoughlin et al. (2023) reported that inter-county male Gaelic footballers' decision-making options were influenced by the pre-match context, current match context, visual information, and individual differences.

Optimal experiences and performing under pressure

Five studies examined optimal experience or aspects of performance under pressure, but due to the low quality, lack of cross-study evidence, or “thinness” of data presented, these findings are somewhat limited. In male adolescent Gaelic footballers, Langan et al. (2016) reported significantly higher dispositional flow in those characterised by a “high autonomy, moderate-high control” motivational profile versus a “moderate-high autonomy, low-moderate control” profile (Langan et al., 2016). An experimental study found that inter-county hurling players ($N = 26$) performed more poorly on a skilled task in a pressured versus non-pressured condition (Hannon & Fitzgerald, 2006), but findings from this study should be interpreted cautiously. In qualitative studies, six hurling/camogie players described experiences that aligned with understanding of flow and clutch states (Jackman, Crust, & Swann, 2020), while a single camogie player in a mixed-sport sample portrayed how responses to pressure can differ (Schweickle et al., 2021) and suggested that perceptions of pressure and performance should be considered when defining a clutch performance (Schweickle et al., 2022).

Identity

Drawing on aspects of cultural sport psychology, three studies offer insights into how sociocultural aspects of Gaelic games and broader societal norms are constituted in the

identities of players. Two studies portrayed how the athletic identities of elite male players were intertwined with the increasingly professional approach to inter-county Gaelic games and their commitment to club and community (Geary et al., 2022; Hughes & Hassan, 2017). For some, an identity grounded deeply in Gaelic games culture could be detrimental for their self-worth (Geary et al., 2022) and leave them vulnerable to burnout (Hassan & Hughes, 2017). Sociocultural expectations tied to gender ideologies were also manifest in the views of young players (Lawler et al., 2021). Some females spoke about status differences; sport could help males to gain peer acceptance, but could be perceived as masculine for females (Lawler et al., 2021). By displaying prowess in sport, it was felt that this could help girls to challenge males' perceptions of their capabilities and that forming an identity through being part of a team could enable girls to construct gender role expectations that involve athleticism (Lawler et al., 2021).

Female coach development

Female coaches are greatly outnumbered by male coaches in Gaelic games (Horgan et al., 2021), but three qualitative studies in non-elite, club-level ladies Gaelic football provide insights into how their development can be scaffolded. A salient finding was that starting out as a coach can be difficult for females, due to confidence struggles (Hogan et al., 2022a, 2022b; O'Dwyer & Bowles, 2021) and new coach-related stressors (O'Dwyer & Bowles, 2021). To improve confidence, various structural, relational, and intrapersonal interventions were suggested, including support structures for female coaches within clubs (Hogan et al., 2022b), coach education, support within the home, good relationships with other coaches (Hogan et al., 2022a), and reflective practice (O'Dwyer & Bowles, 2021).

Discussion

In this scoping review, we aimed to provide the first, comprehensive review of published research on the psychology of Gaelic games, with the goal of generating knowledge to inform research, policy, and practice. The first study included in the review was published in 2006, but there has been a recent surge in interest, with 62.09% of Gaelic games-only studies ($k = 38$) published in the five years prior to the review (2018–2023). Our synthesis offers insights into unique aspects of Gaelic games. For example, researchers have illustrated how sociocultural and contextual aspects of Gaelic games (e.g., commitment as elite-amateur players, competition structure) are constituted in the identities of male inter-county players (Geary et al., 2022), may leave them susceptible to burnout (Hughes & Hassan, 2017), and could lead to negative behaviours (i.e., binge drinking; MacGearailt et al., 2023). Likewise, gendered dimensions of involvement were revealed, including challenges faced by new female coaches (Hogan et al., 2022a, 2022b), the salience of gender ideologies in young players (Lawler et al., 2021), and gender differences in barriers to mental health help-seeking after injury (O'Keeffe et al., 2022). Consequently, our findings highlight the power of culture in the Gaelic games context.

In presenting this review, we hope it can provide the impetus for researchers to conduct more high-quality research in Gaelic games and to establish a more coherent psychology research agenda. Although there is room to expand literature on psychology in Gaelic games, we argue that sufficient evidence exists to form recommendations that can guide future research and have implications for policy and practice. In line with our

research aim, we first offer five recommendations to support researchers, before proposing five evidence-informed policy and practice implications. As we focused our review on Gaelic games, our recommendations inevitably focus on this context, but the proposed implications could have the potential for transferability to contexts that share similarities with Gaelic games.

Recommendations for research

Recommendation 1: conduct more equitable, diverse, and inclusive research

In sport psychology research, males tend to be significantly over-represented (53.51%) in comparison to females (46.25%) and other gender identities (Walton et al., 2022), yet our scoping review found much starker inequalities in Gaelic games, with 81.54% of participants identified as male or men. Although this in part reflects the higher proportion of male players (60% of inter-county players – GPA, 2021; youth level – Hardie-Murphy et al., 2017), coaches (80% – Horgan et al., 2021), and referees (e.g., Blake et al., 2009; O'Connor et al., 2022), it should also raise questions about sampling decisions undertaken in some past studies. While the emergence of a small but growing corpus of female-specific research is encouraging, further progress is needed to make a meaningful contribution towards redressing gender disparities in participation and to develop research that can adequately address the needs of women and girls. In this regard, potential lines of inquiry include psychological aspects of dropout; menstrual health; mental ill-health; motherhood; and menopause. Furthermore, wider recommendations for the conduct and reporting of gender in sport psychology research (Walton et al., 2022) should be followed. Additionally, we recommend more cross- and multi-cultural studies, to recognise the increasing diversity of Gaelic games members, and research exploring inclusive Gaelic games (e.g., GAA for All). Ultimately, we call for researchers to play their part in helping to create a more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and socially-just Gaelic games community.

Recommendation 2: align Gaelic games research with player development pathway

To enhance the potential uptake and transfer of research into practice and make a more meaningful and impactful contribution to Gaelic games at all levels, we encourage consideration of broader policies in Gaelic games in research design and conduct. Using the Gaelic games player pathway (GAA, 2022a) and framework for sport science (Lane et al., 2023) adopted by all Gaelic games national governing bodies as an organising framework, we suggest that more high-quality studies are needed that focus on promoting participation and active lifestyles (i.e., foundation stage), developing playing potential (i.e., talent stage), and preparing players to perform at the elite/high-performance level (i.e., achieving excellence stage). Alongside studying player development and participation, other aspects of Gaelic games involvement should be studied, such as personal development, mental health, and career transitions (e.g., retirement). Furthermore, our review findings demonstrate that although studies on the psychology of Gaelic games have been largely monodisciplinary, some studies have advanced understanding of psychological matters by adopting a different disciplinary lens (e.g., Hughes & Hassan, 2017) or combining psychology with another discipline (e.g., physiology – Cullen et al., 2021). As interdisciplinary research can offer more comprehensive knowledge and the

integration of sub-disciplines is a core element of the framework for sport science, we recommend more interdisciplinary collaborations in future.

Recommendation 3: widen research to consider the range of people involved in Gaelic games

In total, 83.30% of participants in the included studies were Gaelic games *players*. This narrow focus is problematic, though, as it overlooks many other people in Gaelic games. To address this, we suggest several research avenues. First, studies on applied sport psychology in Gaelic games are needed to address the absence of such evidence in our findings. As sport psychology practitioners are key to the delivery of psychology provision at all levels (Lane et al., 2023) and their services should be context-driven to maximise effectiveness (Schinke & Stambulova, 2016), this research is required to equip practitioners with the cultural competence and contextual intelligence needed to be effective. Second, more research is needed to promote the performance, wellbeing, recruitment, and retainment of current and aspiring Gaelic games officials. As dual-career officials, Gaelic games referees will encounter unique challenges compared to their professional counterparts. Along with developing interventions that address issues of abuse (Brick et al., 2022), research is needed to establish the psychological needs of Gaelic games officials to inform the development of support structures and training to help them to excel in their performances and to cope with the unique demands they face, on and off the pitch. Third, parents/carers and volunteers are vital to every Gaelic games club, yet little is known about their experiences. To better support their involvement, researchers could explore the role and value of parents/carers and volunteers in Gaelic games, influences on their involvement, the impact of being involved (e.g., for their mental health), and strategies to support their involvement. Finally, further research with coaches is needed, including on how their performance can be enhanced, how they develop high-quality coach-athlete relationships, the impacts of Gaelic games coaching on them and how they cope, and what the integration of psychological principles into their coaching philosophy and practices can do for them and their players.

Recommendation 4: advance research conceptually and methodologically

Based on our review, we offer some specific recommendations for conceptual and methodological advancement in psychology research in Gaelic games. At the conceptual level, there was limited research on interpersonal and social phenomena. Therefore, further research underpinned by social psychology (e.g., group dynamics in teams) and organisational psychology (e.g., to study team environments) frameworks is warranted. A further conceptual and methodological issue is the preoccupation with investigating symptomology of mental health *problems* (e.g., depression, anxiety). Consequently, we advise a shift towards conceptualising mental health as more than the absence of mental ill-health (e.g., Keyes, 2002) via the incorporation of more positive measures of mental health outcomes (e.g., wellbeing, optimism). Finally, many studies in the review (e.g., those underpinned by post-positivism) directed little attention to sociocultural aspects of Gaelic games, both in research conduct and reporting. In future, we advocate for researchers to consider cultural sport psychology (e.g., Geary et al., 2022) and to embrace theoretical and methodological

perspectives that centralise (rather than reduce) culture and intersecting cultural identities (e.g., McGannon & Smith, 2015).

Recommendation 5: increase the quality and ambition of mental health research

Multiple studies have been published on the prevalence and/or correlates of mental ill-health symptoms across various adult (particularly inter-county) samples, but only two interventions focused on mental health in Gaelic games were reported. Given that these community-based sports have over 850,000 members (Meyler et al., 2023) and the existing evidence of the nexus between sport and health promotion in clubs through the GAA's Healthy Club project (Lane et al., 2021), developing sport-based interventions that seek to improve mental health through Gaelic games could have the potential to reach large numbers of people and to have significant public health benefits. Consequently, we suggest that the development of sport-based mental health interventions in Gaelic games represents an important area for further research and is timely given calls internationally to develop mental healthcare guidelines for recreational sport (Vella & Swann, 2021). With evidence illustrating sociocultural influences on mental health help-seeking (e.g., stigma – O'Keeffe et al., 2022) and the poor acceptability of an intervention to reduce alcohol consumption (Darker et al., 2013; O'Farrell et al., 2018), we encourage the use of coproduction (Smith et al., 2023) to develop culturally-informed interventions. Ultimately, developing effective and scalable, community-based mental health interventions through high-quality research could not only have implications for Gaelic games, but also for other community-based sports contexts.

Implications for policy and practice

Recommendation 1: enhance coach education programmes and support for female coaches

Recruiting, developing, and retaining volunteer coaches is fundamental to enabling participation in Gaelic games. Currently, there is limited engagement with psychology in Gaelic games coach education. For example, the GAA's most advanced coach education courses, Award 1 (intermediate) and Award 2 (advanced), only include a single module on psychology, termed "psychological focus" (GAA, 2022b). With the fundamental role of psychology at all playing stages (Lane et al., 2023) and more than one in four Gaelic games coaches ($N = 10,647$) expressing a desire for more psychology knowledge (Horgan et al., 2021), our review now offers evidence that can be used to inform psychoeducation within Gaelic games coaching programmes, especially in relation to youth Gaelic games. Findings from our review suggest youth coaches should be educated on how to create playing environments that increase perceptions of available support, cultivate a sense of shared identity, nurture players' basic psychological needs, and centralise fun and enjoyment. Additionally, at a broader coach-development level, we suggest efforts to grow the numbers of female, Gaelic games coaches should focus on creating supportive club structures that help females to get involved in coaching, develop their confidence, and be mentored by more experienced coaches.

Recommendation 2: clear guidelines and education are needed for mental health support

Given evidence of mental health concerns among several populations in Gaelic games (e.g., Brick et al., 2022; Duffy et al., 2021; Gouttebauge et al., 2016; Sheehan et al., 2018), this calls for basic education on mental health across all levels and roles. Awareness should be raised of factors within Gaelic games that can potentially malnourish mental health, for which most evidence to date has developed with players. Our findings suggest that injuries in elite players, as well as academic commitments and/or sporting setbacks in university student-athletes, are positively related to mental ill-health. Although more evidence is needed to develop robust, evidence-based policies, based on findings generated to date, we suggest that focus should be placed on maintaining open lines of communication with players, engaging in careful monitoring, being vigilant when scenarios that could potentially jeopardise mental health arise, and adopting a positive attitude towards help-seeking behaviour. Furthermore, although MHL interventions could help individuals, such as coaches, players, parents, and administrators, to be an *initial* source of help, it is vital that individuals displaying signs of mental ill-health are referred to qualified mental health professionals. In this respect, clear guidance should be in place for mental health referrals at all levels (see Moesch et al., 2018) and individuals should be aware of available supports. Consequently, this demonstrates the importance of having qualified sport psychology practitioners who are clear on the parameters of their role and can identify and refer individuals with mental health concerns to appropriately-trained professionals.

Recommendation 3: efforts to curb burnout should (continue to) consider structure and culture

The intense focus on burnout in Gaelic games athletes in the academic literature aligns with wider concerns in Gaelic games for almost two decades, with no less than five reports on burnout commissioned by the GAA published between 2007 and 2017 (O’Kane, 2022). Consistent with recommendations for preventing burnout in sport (Madigan et al., 2019), we suggest that there is a need to integrate sociocultural and psychological perspectives when seeking to reduce burnout. Regarding structural and sociocultural aspects, numerous changes have been made to competition structures (e.g., splitting club and county season) and rules (e.g., age and training restrictions) to reduce demands on players. Such interventions could, at least in part, begin to address concerns surrounding the impact of structural aspects of Gaelic games on player burnout (Hughes & Hassan, 2017) and the constant cycle of competitions (Tamminen et al., 2022). Nevertheless, further efforts are needed to ensure that sociocultural factors and social norms that might perpetuate behaviours that could lead to burnout (e.g., playing through injuries – Hughes & Hassan, 2017) are not transmitted within these environments. Based on evidence from the only intervention conducted to date that attempted to reduce burnout in youth Gaelic games players (Langan et al., 2015), a further suggestion is to educate coaches on how to implement coaching practices that ensure players have choice, experience mastery, and have a sense of belonging. At the individual level, interventions should seek to reduce the potential for chronic stress, identify when a player might

be at risk of burnout (e.g., through monitoring), and help players develop and enact effective coping strategies.

Recommendation 4: be aware of the perils of an athletic identity and the performance narrative

Recognition is needed among coaches, players, and support providers (e.g., administrators, sport psychology practitioners, sport scientists) of the potentially detrimental consequences that can arise by developing a strong athletic identity and how this can be shaped by the sociocultural context of Gaelic games (Geary et al., 2022). Given that Gaelic games players are now dedicating over 30 hours per week to their sport (Kelly et al., 2019), this likely puts them at heightened risk of developing a unidimensional athletic identity. The life of Gaelic games players at the elite level arguably resonates with the performance narrative, a dominant narrative in elite sport that espouses a single-minded dedication to excelling in sport and prioritising this over all other areas of one's life (Douglas & Carless, 2006). The performance narrative is a product of broader sporting culture, and our review provides evidence of hallmarks of this narrative in elite male Gaelic games (Geary et al., 2021; Hughes & Hassan, 2017). Awareness should be raised among coaches, players, and support providers of the potentially debilitating consequences of the performance narrative and its potential to impair self-worth, wellbeing, and identity development, especially following disappointments (e.g., results, injuries) or retirement. As narratives revolve around the social world, there is a need to be mindful of the narratives that circulate, are promoted, and are endorsed in Gaelic games. Resistance to a dominant narrative is difficult, but we suggest that it could be beneficial to broaden the repertoire of narratives available within the culture of Gaelic games, to include narratives that emphasise the processes of self-discovery and experiencing life (i.e., discovery narrative), and the enjoyment of sharing the journey with others (i.e., relational narrative), both of which also represent routes to sporting success (Douglas & Carless, 2006).

Recommendation 5: adopt an interdisciplinary approach to support injured players

Players who develop injuries can benefit from being offered relevant psychological support after injury onset, during rehabilitation, and in the return to play as part of an interdisciplinary approach. By attending to the psychological needs of injured players, this can help to increase the likelihood that they return to play in an optimal state of physical and mental health. Support providers of players should be aware of maladaptive psychological responses to injury that can arise and the potential support they can offer. For example, coaches and medical staff could benefit from being aware of how to provide social support (e.g., emotional support) to injured players, sport psychology practitioners could help athletes to use appropriate coping strategies (e.g., goal setting), while mental health professionals could support injured players who display mental health concerns. As severe injuries are related to poorer mental health (Gouttebauge et al., 2016), this underscores the importance of ensuring that players have access to support from qualified professionals when required. Careful attention should also be directed towards players who display an athletic identity due to a positive association with depressive symptoms (Renton et al., 2021). At the

same time, it is also important to be cognisant of cultural scripts that might be problematic for athletes. For instance, evidence suggesting that players might play through injury (Hughes & Hassan, 2017) resonates with the snowball narrative of injury in elite track and field athletes, whereby athletes were socialised into a culture of playing through injuries (Everard et al., 2021). Making athletes, coaches, and service providers aware of alternative injury narratives (e.g., longevity narrative – Everard et al., 2021) could open up different ways for athletes to make sense of and negotiate injury experiences.

Strengths and limitations of the review

Our scoping review had a number of strengths, including that we enhanced quality via pre-registration of our review protocol; following established guidance for scoping reviews; engaging in coproduction; involving two authors in the screening process; and assessing the quality of included studies. Nevertheless, we acknowledge several limitations. First, some relevant participants were excluded due to being in mixed samples, but as data attributable to Gaelic games participants were not identifiable, it was not possible to include them. Second, our findings could be susceptible to publication bias as we limited our review to peer-reviewed journal articles and omitted grey literature and unpublished research.

Conclusions

In this scoping review, we contributed original knowledge to the sport science literature in Gaelic games by offering the first summary of the extent and types of published research conducted on psychology in Gaelic games. Our review demonstrates that a significant body of research has developed in this area, but there is a need for further improvement. To encourage progress in this field and illustrate how the existing research can impact upon Gaelic games, we provided five key recommendations for research and five implications for policy and practice. Ultimately, by taking on board the recommendations for research and developing a more coherent body of high-quality research, this can supplement the vision for sports science, inclusive of sport psychology, in Gaelic Games. In turn, this will help to build an evidence base that can better inform policy and practice and lead to meaningful and tangible benefits at all levels, including for players, coaches, parents, psychology practitioners, sport science personnel, officials, administrators, representative bodies, and national governing bodies.

Data availability statement

The authors confirm that data supporting findings of this study are available within the article and its supplementary materials.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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