Sport Creates Opportunities

Impacts of Sport for Development on Employability of Youth in Mexico

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SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CECyTEM	Colegio de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos del Estado de México (Scientific and Technological Studies Schools)
CONALEP	Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica (National College of Technical Professional Education)
ENDIREH	National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GSU	German Sport University Cologne
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEMS	Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superio (Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education)
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
S4D	Sport for Development

SPORT FOR
DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, Sport for Development (S4D) has garnered considerable attention from diverse stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, government agencies, sport practitioners, and academics globally. The biggest impact of sport may certainly be expected in relation to the development of life and soft skills. Sport can draw attention to almost any issue and is considered an attractive activity for the majority of youth. In a project in Toluca, Mexico, Sport for Development was used in a targeted manner as a tool to promote different aspects of employability among youth. The aim was to foster soft skills among participants, particularly young women, enhancing their employability and empowering them to positively impact their communities.

The present study evaluates whether a six-month-long S4D intervention can impact the communication competences, self-confidence, cooperation competences and goal orientation of young girls in vocational schools in Mexico. The findings indicate a positive trend, although the results are not statistically significant. This is likely due to two factors: the short duration of the intervention and the high drop-out rates among students participating in the survey, which reveal a methodological weakness in the study design. Given the short intervention period of just six months, these results are quite noteworthy. Achieving behavioral changes and translating knowledge from theory into practice requires both time and continuous engagement.

Despite the lack of statistical significance, the results remain important in a descriptive sense because they highlight positive trends and patterns that suggest that the S4D project is making a difference. These trends provide valuable insights into how the project impacts youth employability skills, indicating potential benefits that may become more pronounced with longer intervention periods and improved study designs.

SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Over the last decade, Sport for Development (S4D) has garnered considerable attention from diverse stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, government agencies, sport practitioners, and academics globally. The conceptualization of Sport for Development involves harnessing the positive impact of sport on public health, the socialization of individuals across various age groups, social inclusion for marginalized populations, economic development at regional and state levels, as well as promoting intercultural exchange and conflict resolution (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011).

The surge in political and institutional backing has led to a continuous rise in the number of sport-based initiatives dedicated to fostering positive development in these domains (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Schulenkorf & Adair, 2014). The appeal of S4D lies in its capacity to attract a broad audience, particularly those with an interest in sport and physical activity, utilizing the inherent momentum in and around sport as a strategic conduit to communicate, implement, and achieve goals unrelated to sport development.

There was a significant upsurge in the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations in delivering Sport for Development programs in Mexico between 2007 and 2017 (Giulianotti, 2011). Most of these organizations were found to operate S4D programs in collaboration with business corporations (both national and transnational), the Mexican government, international funding agencies, and national universities (González, 2021). These programs were implemented across all 32 states in Mexico, with a notable focus on Mexico City. Interestingly, a concentration of S4D organizations was observed in the Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México and urban settings, particularly in capital cities across the country. In the present day, as argued by Giulianotti et al. (2019), Sport for Development has evolved into a distinct and well-established field within international development.

Still, there remains a scarcity of high-quality research analyzing if and how Sport for Development can positively influence development outcomes (Langer, 2015; Jaitman and Scartascini 2017; Gonzales, 2021). There is a notable lack of evidence especially in South and Central America, with only 3% of research conducted in the region and 1% of researchers located on the continent (Van Eekeren et al., 2013; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Additionally, as Cronin (2011) highlights, only 1.89% of Sport for Development reports focus on South American countries. Many researchers emphasize the need for systematic and rigorous evaluations. This report aims to address this evidence gap with a quasi-experimental study on the impacts of S4D on the employability skills of young girls.

Further insights into the relationship between sport, youth development, and employability are provided by studies examining the relevance of soft skills developed through sport and the impact of sport programs on life skill development for socially vulnerable youth (Cognac, 2014; Hermens et al., 2017). These studies challenge the dichotomy between sport excellence and perceived job readiness, emphasizing the value of sport-based skill development in the hiring process (Cognac, 2014). Moreover, they suggest that sport programs have the potential to enhance cognitive and social life skills among vulnerable youth, although methodological challenges warrant a cautious interpretation of the findings (Hermens et al., 2017).

Collectively, these studies underscore the multifaceted relationship between sport, youth development, and employability, highlighting the potential of S4D programs to empower youth, particularly girls, with the skills and opportunities needed to access stable and fulfilling employment.

SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT IN MEXICO

The recovery of the labor market from the COVID-19 recession has exhibited strength, although it experienced a slowdown in momentum during 2022 and early 2023 amid an economic deceleration (OECD, 2023). In the case of Mexico, the unemployment rate has steadily decreased since reaching its peak at 5.5% in June 2020 (OECD, 2023). By May 2023, it had fallen to 3%, surpassing its pre-pandemic level of 3.2% in December 2019. This decline mirrors the labor market recovery observed in many OECD countries.

Additionally, the employment rate rebounded, standing at 63.8% in Q1 2023, which is nearly 1.5 percentage points above its pre-pandemic level. Mexico has successfully absorbed the increase in inactivity caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The inactivity rate dropped to 34.3% in Q1 2023, a 1.4 percentage point decrease from Q1 2022 and below the pre-pandemic level of 35.3%. This positive trend is particularly notable among women, with their inactivity rate decreasing by 2.3 percentage points to 48.7% over the same period. This differential pattern suggests a promising recovery in female labor force participation, indicating potential further advancements (OECD, 2023).

Youth employment (among 15 – 24-year-olds) in Mexico is a pressing issue as the country endeavors to harness the potential of its young population to drive economic growth and development. As of 04/2024, the youth unemployment rate in Mexico stands at 6.5%, among females and 6.2% among males which is higher than the national average unemployment rate. This indicates a significant challenge in integrating young people into the labor market (OECD, 2024).

WOMEN'S LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION IN MEXICO

In recent years, the dynamics of women's employment participation in Mexico have become a focal point of attention, reflecting the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that shape the gender landscape within the country's labor market. The labor force participation rate among females is 46.8% and among males 77.4% for 2023 (World Bank, 2024a), with 51% women in the total population (World Bank, 2024b).

In Mexico, gender disparity is glaring in labor market participation, with women comprising only 40% of the employed population aged 15 and above, as opposed to 60% for men. This imbalance is pervasive across both formal and informal economies. For women navigating the complexities of employment, various challenges emerge, encompassing obstacles in both formal and informal economic spheres.

In the informal economy, where 56% of the female workforce operates, women face a confluence of hardships, including low wages, inadequate social security coverage, and heightened vulnerability to workplace violence (López Marmolejo et al., 2021). Approximately thirteen million women in Mexico engage in informal economy activities, and the 2022 National Occupation Survey reveals that a majority of them are subordinate paid workers (51%), with fewer women assuming entrepreneurial roles (2%) compared to the formal sector (4%) (ENOE, 2022). Correspondingly, self-employment is more prevalent among women in the informal economy (36%) than in the formal economy (6.7%).

Moreover, women are disproportionately represented as unpaid workers in family businesses, particularly in roles such as vendors, artisans, industrial workers, and agricultural workers. Notably, women dominate the realm of paid domestic work in the informal economy (23% versus 2% of men), an occupation rife with challenges such as the absence of health services or social security benefits, especially in roles like cleaning and cooking.

Transitioning to the barriers inhibiting women's participation in the formal economy, both supply-side and demand-side factors come into play. Supply-side challenges include the impact of marriage, unions, and motherhood on women's labor force participation (Ruiz & Pereznieto, 2022). Martínez et al. (2021) highlight that mothers experience a 5.5% reduction in employment rates and a 6.3% decline in hourly earnings relative to childless women. Motherhood is further associated with a diminished probability of securing paid employment, and women encounter a notable salary penalty when attempting to re-enter the labor market after having a child. The burden of care responsibilities borne by women in households often leads to temporary or permanent job exits or transitions to part-time work. These challenges are particularly acute in the formal economy due to inflexible work arrangements. The absence of affordable and reliable childcare services compounds these issues.

In recognition of these challenges, there have been legislative efforts, such as the approval of a constitutional reform in 2020 proposing the implementation of the National Care System (Ruiz & Pereznieto, 2022). However, this reform awaits approval and funding in the Senate. Additionally, localized initiatives, like the subsidized childcare program in Chihuahua, aim to enhance employment access and retention, particularly for parents in the informal sector.

Discriminatory social norms add another layer of complexity, with women disproportionately burdened by unpaid care work, influenced by harmful societal expectations (Ruiz & Pereznieto, 2022). The World Values Survey indicates that 60% of women in Mexico agree with the notion that „When a mother has paid work, children suffer" (López Marmolejo et al., 2021). These norms contribute to low expectations for women's professional development, fostering underestimation of their abilities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields from an early age. Limited access to financial services, including credit, coupled with challenges related to breastfeeding at workplaces due to insufficient provisions stipulated in labor laws, further act as supply-side barriers (Iliana Vaca Trigo, 2019).

Continuing the analysis, demand-side barriers further contribute to the gender disparity in Mexico's labor market. The level of economic activity plays a pivotal role, with women experiencing higher labor force participation in urban areas and regions with elevated wages (Niesten & Hyland, 2022). Conversely, areas with low economic activity pose challenges for women in accessing formal, paid job opportunities. Discriminatory labor regulations exacerbate the issue. Mexican legislation lacks explicit prohibitions against potential employers inquiring about a woman's family situation during the recruitment process. While the law mandates equal pay for equal work, the absence of a clear definition of equal value between men's and women's work results in widespread non-compliance. Furthermore, the legal framework fails to grant parents the right to choose labor agreements that offer more flexible maternity and paternity leave options (Niesten & Hyland, 2022).

Deep-seated discriminatory social and gender norms amplify these challenges, perpetuating the perception that women are ill-suited for certain sectors and job types (ILO, 2014). Low social expectations hinder women's professional careers, reflected in attitudes where two out of ten people in Mexico believe men to be better executives than women. Additionally, one in four people in Mexico holds the belief that, during periods of job scarcity, men should have a greater entitlement to employment (Mckinsey, 2022). In professions related to STEM, where gender pay gaps are generally smaller, only three out of ten professionals are women (Chávez et al., 2022).

Gender segregation in private companies compounds the hindrances to women's professional development. Discriminatory norms result in vertical gender segregation, with women representing only 9% of boards of directors, 1% as chief executives, and 15% as vice presidents and area directors in Mexican private sector companies (Chávez et al., 2022). A mere 35% of women occupy general worker positions in these companies.

Workplace violence emerges as a significant barrier, discouraging women's entry and persistence in formal employment. The 2021 National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (ENDIREH) in Mexico reports that 27.9% of women aged 15 and over have experienced workplace violence during their professional lives (Ruiz & Pereznieto, 2022). The prevalent forms of workplace discrimination include having fewer opportunities for promotion than men and receiving less pay than male counterparts. However, there exists a notable research gap regarding the extent of workplace violence faced by women in Mexico.

Addressing these demand-side barriers necessitates comprehensive legal reforms, the challenging of discriminatory norms, and the fostering of inclusive workplace environments. By dismantling these obstacles, Mexico can create a more equitable and conducive atmosphere for women's full and meaningful participation in the formal labor market.

GENDER DISPARITIES IN MEXICO

Mexico grapples with a myriad of contradictions, and obstacles, with gender equality standing out as a paramount yet elusive objective. Globally, the nation holds the 32nd position in the gender gap index, trailing behind fellow Latin American and Caribbean countries like Nicaragua, Barbados, and Costa Rica (Statista, 2023). Despite making strides in certain areas like women's economic engagement, Mexico languishes at the 122nd spot worldwide in this aspect. As outlined before, the female labor force participation rate in Mexico is registering at 46.8% in 2023, starkly contrasting the 77.4 % observed among males (World Bank, 2024a). This glaring discrepancy poses a significant challenge to gender equality, as more than half of working-age women in the country neither hold formal employment nor actively seek it. Despite concerted investments and various initiatives aimed at combating gender discrimination, Mexico remains entrenched in battling ingrained sexist attitudes, stereotyping, and patriarchal social norms.

Addressing the gender pay gap, Mexico records a relatively modest disparity of approximately -13.51%, meaning that for every 100 pesos earned by a man, a woman typically earns around 86.49 pesos (Statista, 2023). Notably, Mexico fares better in gender pay equity compared to several OECD nations such as the United States, Canada, Finland, and the United Kingdom. However, this gap widens in sectors where women constitute the majority of the workforce while shrinking in industries dominated by men. For instance, male-dominated fields like agriculture, construction, and mining exhibit positive pay disparities favoring female workers, contrary to sectors like retail commerce, media, or education, where men enjoy significantly higher earnings than women. Moreover, the wage gap amplifies with lower educational attainment, with women possessing only pre-primary education earning approximately 45% less than their male counterparts, while those with higher education face a 6% deficit.

Beyond wage differentials, gender disparities extend to employment rates, particularly affecting mothers. Employment rates for women under 20 years of age plummet to below 30% if they have children aged one to five, contrasting sharply with the over 94% employment rate observed among men in similar circumstances (Statista, 2023). Indeed, across all age brackets and parental statuses, male employment rates significantly surpass those of females. Compounding economic disparities, women face higher involvement in the informal economy, leaving many without formal contracts, social security, health insurance, legal protections, or adequate wages. Additionally, women's economic prospects suffer due to their disproportionate engagement in unpaid household labor or subsistence production for family consumption, further perpetuating systemic inequalities.

SPORT FOR EMPLOYABILITY

In Employability "is the combination of all factors which enable [a young person] to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during a career" (CEDEFOP, 2011: 46). This combination of factors includes the possession of basic educational skills, vocational qualifications, technical or job-specific knowledge plus the individual's personal qualities, attitudes, and attributes, usually called soft- or life skills. The International Labour Organization (ILO) describes four core competences for good employability: learning to learn, communication, teamwork and problem-solving (Brewer, 2013). The biggest impact of sport may certainly be expected in relation to the development of life and soft skills.

Sport for Employability (SfE) is not a stand-alone concept. It rather represents a specific focus within the broader approach of Sport for Development (S4D). It includes all measures where sport is used in a targeted manner as a tool to promote the different aspects of employability at any stage of career pathways. It is important to note that employability not only develops through formal education but also through informal learning and personal development. The individual environment of youth plays an essential role in this regard, sport can help to reach youth who would be hard to reach through other channels. This is due to the fact that sport can draw attention to almost any issue and is considered an attractive activity for the majority of youth. Especially the final years of school and the transition into university, vocational education or work are associated with great challenges and uncertainties for young persons. Disorientation, setbacks, and frustration can be just as much a part of this phase of life as joyful anticipation, big dreams, and important developmental steps. The stronger and more stable youth are in their personalities, the better they succeed in their transition to adult life. Sport can help build trusting relationships with the target group and strengthen their health, wellbeing, confidence, and resilience. Especially youth from vulnerable groups may benefit from such empowerment, as it provides them with a more solid foundation for the specific challenges of this developmental stage (GIZ, 2022).

Building on sport's unique ability to reach out to youth and build trusting relationships with them, sport can also be used as the starting point from which youth can be connected to other supporting agencies. In connection with sport-related events or activities, youth can be brought into contact with universities, career counsellors or potential employers in a non-formal, low-barrier environment. However, the most important function of sport in terms of promoting employability lies in its educational potential and the opportunities it offers to teach life skills in a very effective and targeted way (GIZ, 2022).

Depending on the specific context, purpose or occupational sector there are long lists of potentially relevant life skills which can be linked to a young person's level of employability: Among many other capabilities, these descriptions often include skills such as adaptability, communication, confidence, conflict resolution, creativity, critical thinking, decision-making, dedication, emotional intelligence, empathy, flexibility, honesty, integrity, leadership, organization, perseverance, politeness, problem-solving, punctuality, reliability, respect for rules, self-discipline, self-motivation, teamwork, tolerance, willingness to learn etc. In addition, many of these skills are interrelated – for example, to be a strong leader one also needs to have good communication and organizational skills. The question of which life skills should be developed through a Sport for Employability program in order to increase the employability of young

people should take several perspectives into account. First, the selection of relevant skills can be based on theoretical considerations derived from research findings and expert knowledge. Second, the skills that are required and expected by potential employers in the different occupational sectors must be considered and finally, the individual skills deficits identified by trainers, mentors, and the participants themselves should also be taken into account. This means that the choice of life skills to be developed in a Sport for Employability program should always consider the specific circumstances (GIZ, 2022).

Sport for Development can help youth equip themselves with a wide range of soft or life skills that match the actual labor market demands. These skills are an indispensable prerequisite for employment. For youth, without any previous work experience, they are a key resource to improve their employment prospects, but unfortunately, even the best skills portfolio is no guarantee for employment in a tight and competitive labor market. This should not diminish the motivation to develop and implement Sport for Employability programs, but it must be considered regarding the expectation management of program developers and youth alike (GIZ, 2022).

In the following, the terminology S4D will be used to describe the Sport for Employability intervention in Mexico. While it is strictly speaking a SfE intervention, the broader term S4D is more common and in order to avoid unclarity, will be used in this report as a more general wording.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN MEXICAN SCHOOLS

In Vocational guidance plays a crucial role in guiding students through the complexities of vocational education in Mexican schools (Cáceres-Reebs & Schneider, 2013). As students navigate the three-tiered education system, they rely on informed decisions guided by vocational counselors and educational advisors.

In Mexico, vocational guidance begins early in a student‘s academic journey, as they transition from basic education to upper secondary education (Cáceres-Reebs & Schneider, 2013). Counselors assist students in understanding the various pathways available, whether it be pursuing professional technical training or opting for general education leading to a high school diploma. They provide insights into the opportunities and career prospects associated with each path, helping students align their interests and aspirations with their educational choices. As students progress through upper secondary education, vocational counselors continue to play a pivotal role in facilitating informed decision-making. They provide personalized guidance tailored to each student‘s strengths, interests, and goals. Whether students choose the vocational track or pursue higher education, counselors offer support in exploring career options, identifying suitable training programs, and understanding the requirements for admission to colleges or vocational schools.

In the context of dual vocational education, vocational guidance takes on added significance. Counselors collaborate with students to explore the benefits of the dual education model, highlighting opportunities for hands-on training, industry partnerships, and potential career pathways. They assist students in navigating the application process, connecting them with participating companies, and providing insights into the expectations and responsibilities associated with dual apprenticeships. Moreover, vocational counselors serve as advocates for students, advocating for resources and support to enhance their vocational education experience. They facilitate communication between students, educators, and industry partners, ensuring alignment between educational curriculum and industry needs. Through ongoing counseling and support, counselors empower students to make informed choices, pursue their passions, and embark on fulfilling career pathways.

In summary, vocational guidance in Mexican schools is instrumental in empowering students to navigate the complexities of vocational education. By providing personalized support, resources, and advocacy, vocational counselors play a vital role in helping students explore, choose, and succeed in their chosen career pathways. Nevertheless, the career choices of young individuals in the region are heavily influenced by social assumptions and expectations, underscoring the significance of effective career guidance (Ayza, 2023). Despite the mandatory career counseling provided in many schools in Mexico, this does not necessarily translate into successful career development for students. Often, inadequate school counseling is supplanted by informal advice from family members or friends. A challenge lies in the fact that the education system is not always tailored to the development of all students. There exists a discrepancy between the most commonly chosen fields of study and the professional demands of the job market. Therefore, career counseling should not solely hinge on technical skills but should also nurture enduring intellectual curiosity. One method to enhance the linkage between education and the labor market is to provide students with direct exposure to various corporate activities. It is imperative for career guidance to accompany and motivate students to engage in their professional lives. Ultimately, the challenge entails developing talents to meet the demand for new skills, while also offering improved working conditions for those pursuing these careers.

SPORT FOR EMPLOYMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN TOLUCA

GIZ partnered with DFB - Deutscher Fußball-Bund, the local NGO Academia Borussia and the Mexican Undersecretariat for Higher Secondary Education (Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior) to implement a Sport for Employability project in Toluca, Mexico. From the GIZ side, two projects were involved, bringing their unique expertise together: The GIZ Program Sport for Development and the GIZ Program on Expansion of the Mexican Dual Vocational Training System (Proyecto Sistema de Formación Profesional Dual).

The Sport for Development implementation in Toluca aims to utilize football as a tool to foster soft skills among participants, particularly young women, enhancing their employability and empowering them to positively impact their communities. The rationale behind this is multifaceted: it seeks to consolidate the existing GIZ approaches, provide a sustainable framework for sport-related development activities considering the upcoming 2026 World Cup in Mexico, and promote long-term cooperation between international and local stakeholders. By empowering young women with valuable skills and opportunities, the S4D implementation aims to create a lasting impact on individuals and communities alike, contributing to a more inclusive and prosperous future.

Weekly S4D training sessions were conducted from September to March in 7 vocational schools led by two female, local S4D coaches, with group sizes ranging from 20 to 35 girls. The aim was to develop the participants' social and personal skills through football practice. The participants had varying levels of football experience; some were familiar with the sport, while others were playing it for the first time. Each session lasted 90 minutes and focused on developing a specific soft skill.

The training sessions consisted of three segments. In the initial segment, the coaches welcomed the girls, introduced the soft skill focus in the form of a game, and conducted a warm-up. The main segment involved a specific game or exercise designed to cultivate the soft skill. The final segment consisted of a cool-down followed by a reflection on the session's focus and activities. At the end of the training session, the girls were given a homework assignment where they had to apply the learned soft skill in their everyday lives. The homework was discussed at the beginning of the following training session.

These sessions were conducted for two hours per week per school. Additionally, sport events serve to strengthen personal skills among both students and teachers, while also promoting the organizational and managerial potential S4D. Before the start of the project, all the trainers involved in the project took part in training sessions lasting several days and were trained by a GIZ S4D expert. This involved the necessary tools to integrate the Sport for Development methodology into their teaching practices, ensuring the sustainability of the initiative within the educational community.

With a specific focus on employability, the project aimed to enhance participants‘ awareness of professional opportunities, critical thinking skills, and overall readiness to enter the job market or pursue further education. Key indicators for success include improvements in communication, confidence, cooperation, and goal orientation.

STUDY DESIGN

To analyze whether GIZ's S4D approach is a meaningful tool to foster employability among youth, the present study evaluated if a six-month-long S4D intervention in 7 vocational schools in Mexico impacts the communication competences, self-confidence, cooperation competences and goal orientation of young persons; and thus examines the following question:

Can S4D contribute to the realization of SDG Target 8.6: By 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training?

A quasi-experimental, longitudinal study design was used to examine possible impacts for Sport for Development (S4D) on female adolescents' employability skills. The intervention group consisted of girls from seven schools in Toluca, Mexico, who received weekly training sessions from September 2023 until March 2024. The comparison group did not receive any type of treatment and was not involved in any type of S4D activity. Data collection took place at two points: the baseline was conducted in September 2023 and the endline in March 2024. The selection of schools for the study was conducted by the Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education (SEMS). Apart from one institution, all selected schools belonged to either the State of Mexico's National College of Technical Professional Education (CONALEP) or the Scientific and Technological Studies Schools (CECyTEM). 141 girls participated in the baseline in the intervention group and 163 in the comparison group. In the endline, 88 girls remained in the intervention group and 129 girls in the comparison group. Girls who joined the intervention group after the baseline were not included in the data analysis. The allocation ratio between the intervention and comparison group is 1:1.

Participants for the intervention and comparison groups were selected based on the following criteria: (1) age between 15 and 17, (2) attendance at one of the seven selected schools, (3) first semester of high school, (4) studying a technical career so that they can enter the dual education project in the third semester and (5) not having participated in any S4D activity before. The intervention group required a willingness to participate in weekly S4D activities. The selection process was non-random, utilising non-probability sampling and self-selection sampling methods. Teachers and school officials disseminated information about the S4D intervention within the schools, enabling interested students to participate. All participants meeting these criteria and expressing interest in the project were enrolled. For the comparison group, school representatives identified participants who met the specified criteria.

A standardized questionnaire, which has been used in previous GIZ projects, was adapted and translated by researchers from the German Sport University Cologne (GSU) and GIZ taking into consideration the specific project intervention and local context. It was then approved by local staff. All participants filled in questionnaires under the supervision of instructors from the German Sports University on laptops, using an online survey tool for data collection.

The study was approved by GIZ's data protection unit. The anonymity of the participants is guaranteed by GIZ, and the General Data Protection Regulation by the European Union is applied. As the study's target group are minors, approval for participation was sought by parents/ legal guardians beforehand. Additionally, schools, directors, and staff were informed about the process and the schools' and teachers' approval was obtained to conduct a data collection on their premises.

To analyze changes in the four competences (communication, cooperation, self-confidence, and goal orientation) between the intervention and comparison group and within each group over time, a mixed between-within ANOVA (also called split-plot ANOVA, between-within ANOVA, or mixed factorial ANOVA) was conducted. It was decided not to conduct a MANOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Variance) as the four dependent variables (communication, cooperation, self-confidence, and goal orientation) do not relate to each other.

The prerequisite for conducting mixed between-within ANOVAs was fulfilled with the dependent variables being interval-scaled and the independent variable/ between-subjects factor nominal-scaled with two independent groups. The within-subjects factor is time (two measuring points) and is independent and nominal-scaled. Regarding outliers, the questions were programmed as Likert scales with pre-defined answer options in order to prevent outliers. As ANOVA is a quite robust analytical method against violations of the normality assumption, especially with large sample sizes and balanced designs, the normality assumption can be neglected (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007; Salkind, 2010).

IMPACTS ON COMMUNICATION

To analyze S4D's impact on communication, a scale with 16 Likert scale items was created measuring communication competences revolving around four competences: non-verbal communication, verbal communication, subtle communication, and communication in conflict situations. As these competences do not necessarily mutually depend on each other, we do not expect Cronbach's Alpha to show internal consistency of the scale. One person can be great in communicating verbally but have low non-verbal communication skills. However, we classify all four competences as the construct of communication competences. Cronbach's Alpha in the baseline is 0.636 and in the endline 0. 612 – confirming our expectations

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,636	16

Figure 1

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,627	16

Figure 2

The same applies to variance homogeneity which is tested through Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances. While variance homogeneity can be neglected with large sample sizes and balanced designs, in our case we still fulfil the assumption of homogeneity. Homogeneity of variances was asserted using Levene's Test based on median which shows that equal variances can be assumed (p = 0.848 in the baseline and p = 0.950 in the endline). We use Levene's Test based on median as it is more robust than based on mean.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Communication.1	Based on Mean	,109	1	176	,742
	Based on Median	,037	1	176	,848
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,037	1	172,316	,848
	Based on trimmed mean	,101	1	176	,751
Communication.2	Based on Mean	,003	1	176	,958
	Based on Median	,004	1	176	,950
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,004	1	175,279	,950
	Based on trimmed mean	,003	1	176	,959

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + IntorControl
Within Subjects Design: MeasuringPoints

Figure 3

As we have a mixed design, we also check for homogeneity in covariance by using Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices. Since the power of Box's Test is dependent on the number of cases, the test becomes more significant the larger the sample is. Some authors therefore recommend not testing the Box's Test at a .05 significance level, but at 0.025 or 0.01 (Mertler, 2004) or 0.001 (Verma, 2015; Warner, 2012). In our case, homogeneity in covariance can be assumed with Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices showing p = 0.922.

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices[a]

Box's M	,494
F	,162
df1	3
df2	1046470,792
Sig.	,922

The assumption of sphericity can be neglected, as it only applies for procedures with measurement repetition that have more than two stages. In the present case there are only two measurement points of time.

The mixed between-within ANOVA conducted to assess the impact of Sport for Development on communication competences across two time periods (pre-intervention, post-intervention) shows that there is no statistically signifi¬cant interaction between group affiliation and time, Greenhouse-Geisser F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.315, p = 0.575, partial η^2 = 0.002.

Figure 4

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
MeasuringPoints	Sphericity Assumed	,039	1	,039	,697	,405	,004
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,039	1,000	,039	,697	,405	,004
	Huynh-Feldt	,039	1,000	,039	,697	,405	,004
	Lower-bound	,039	1,000	,039	,697	,405	,004
MeasuringPoints * IntorControl	Sphericity Assumed	,017	1	,017	,315	,575	,002
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,017	1,000	,017	,315	,575	,002
	Huynh-Feldt	,017	1,000	,017	,315	,575	,002
	Lower-bound	,017	1,000	,017	,315	,575	,002
Error(MeasuringPoints)	Sphericity Assumed	9,752	176	,055			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	9,752	176,000	,055			
	Huynh-Feldt	9,752	176,000	,055			
	Lower-bound	9,752	176,000	,055			

Figure 5

It also shows that there is no significant main effect for time, Greenhouse-Geisser F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.697, p = 0.405, partial η^2 = 0.004 – meaning that there are no differences that could be attributed to time alone, regardless of the group membership (intervention or comparison group) of the participants.

Furthermore, there are no differences between the intervention and comparison group that are independent of the factor time. There is no significant main effect for group, meaning that intervention group and comparison group do not differ significantly, F(1.00, 176.00) = 2.511, p = 0.115, η^2 = 0.014.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	2509,373	1	2509,373	12673,235	<,001	,986
IntorControl	,497	1	,497	2,511	,115	,014
Error	34,849	176	,198			

Figure 6

In conclusion, quantitative data suggests no statistically significant effect of S4D on the communication competence of youth. However, as the graph below shows, there is a positive development in the communication skills of S4D participants compared to the comparison group. Often, participants know the terminologies, but do not use the learned compe¬tences and do not reflect their own communication style. Thus, the lack of a significant quantitative result might be due to a lacking transferal of knowledge from theory into the practice – and a lack of time for teachers and social workers to address this. A longer intervention period might not only increase knowledge among participants, but also impact behavioural changes regarding communication.

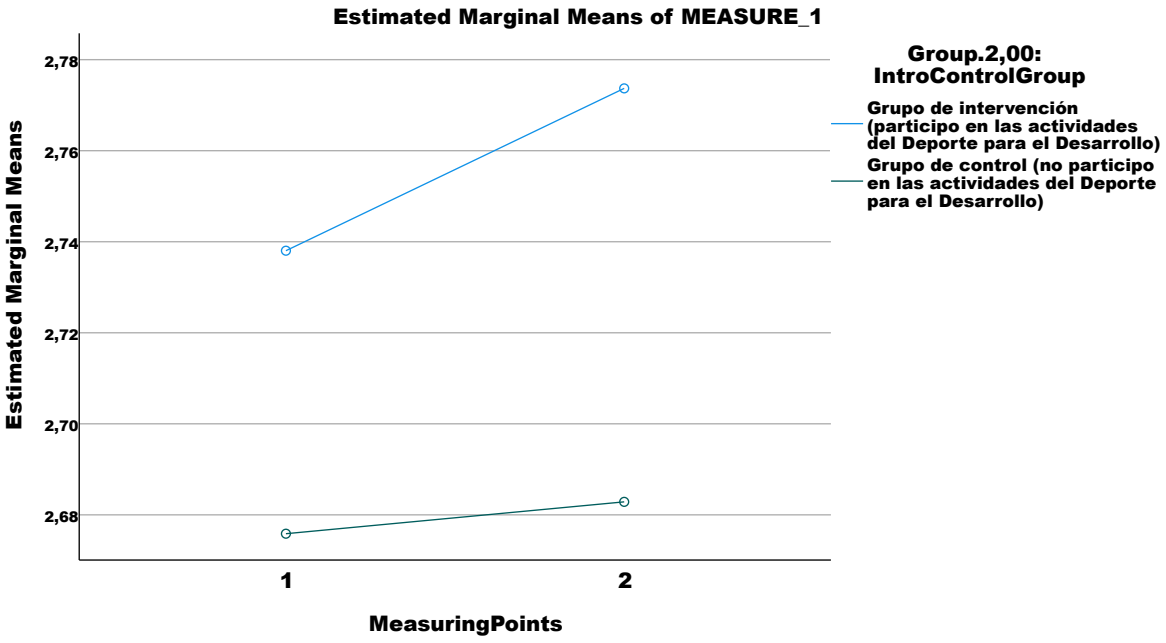

Figure 7

IMPACT ON COOPERATION

Cooperation competences among youth were measured by creating a scale of 14 variables since cooperation is a latent construct. Cronbach's Alpha shows good internal consistency of the scale for baseline and endline with values of 0.761 (baseline) and 0.733 (endline).

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,761	14

Figure 8

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,733	14

Figure 9

Homogeneity of variances was asserted using Levene's Test based on median which shows that equal variances can be assumed in the baseline (p = 0.142) and in the endline (p = 0.536).

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Cooperation.1	Based on Mean	2,270	1	176	,134
	Based on Median	2,178	1	176	,142
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2,178	1	167,772	,142
	Based on trimmed mean	2,261	1	176	,134
Cooperation.2	Based on Mean	,392	1	176	,532
	Based on Median	,385	1	176	,536
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,385	1	174,859	,536
	Based on trimmed mean	,392	1	176	,532

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + IntorControl
Within Subjects Design: MeasuringPoints

Figure 10

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices[a]

Box's M	3,094
F	1,018
df1	3
df2	1046470,792
Sig.	,384

Figure 11

Checking for homogeneity in covariance in the case of a large sample, as recommended by Mertler (2004), Verma (2015) and Warner (2012), the Box's Test is tested at a 0.001 significance level. With p = 0.384 homogeneity in covariance is asserted.

The assumption of sphericity can be neglected, as this only applies for procedures with measurement repetition that have more than two stages. In the present case there are only two measurement points of time.

The mixed between-within ANOVA conducted to assess the impact of Sport for Development on cooperation com¬petences across two time periods (pre-intervention, post-intervention) shows that there is no statistically significant interaction between group affiliation and time, Greenhouse-Geisser F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.476, p = 0.491, partial η^2 = 0.003.

It also shows that there is no significant main effect for time, Greenhouse-Geisser F(1.00, 176.00) = 3.254, p = 0.073, partial η^2 = 0.018 – meaning that there are no differences that could be attributed to time alone, regardless of the group membership (intervention or comparison group) of the participants.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
MeasuringPoints	Sphericity Assumed	,392	1	,392	3,254	,073	,018
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,392	1,000	,392	3,254	,073	,018
	Huynh-Feldt	,392	1,000	,392	3,254	,073	,018
	Lower-bound	,392	1,000	,392	3,254	,073	,018
MeasuringPoints * IntorControl	Sphericity Assumed	,057	1	,057	,476	,491	,003
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,057	1,000	,057	,476	,491	,003
	Huynh-Feldt	,057	1,000	,057	,476	,491	,003
	Lower-bound	,057	1,000	,057	,476	,491	,003
Error(MeasuringPoints)	Sphericity Assumed	21,224	176	,121			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	21,224	176,000	,121			
	Huynh-Feldt	21,224	176,000	,121			
	Lower-bound	21,224	176,000	,121			

Figure 12

The following figure shows that there are however differences between the intervention and comparison group that are independent of the factor time. There is a significant main effect for group, meaning that intervention group and comparison group differed significantly, F(1.00, 176.00) = 7.607, p = 0.006, η^2 = 0.041. This signifies that the differences observed between the two groups cannot be attributed to the S4D intervention but for example might have been existent even before the intervention.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	2272,877	1	2272,877	7946,288	<,001	,978
IntorControl	2,176	1	2,176	7,607	,006	,041
Error	50,341	176	,286			

Figure 13

In conclusion, quantitative data demonstrates no statistically significant effect of S4D on cooperation among youth. Still, there is a positive development in the cooperation competences of the intervention group, compared to the comparison group. This leads to the assumption that more S4D sessions and a longer implementation period is needed to increase cooperation among participants, since cooperation as such and behavioral changes in general are not realized in the short term.

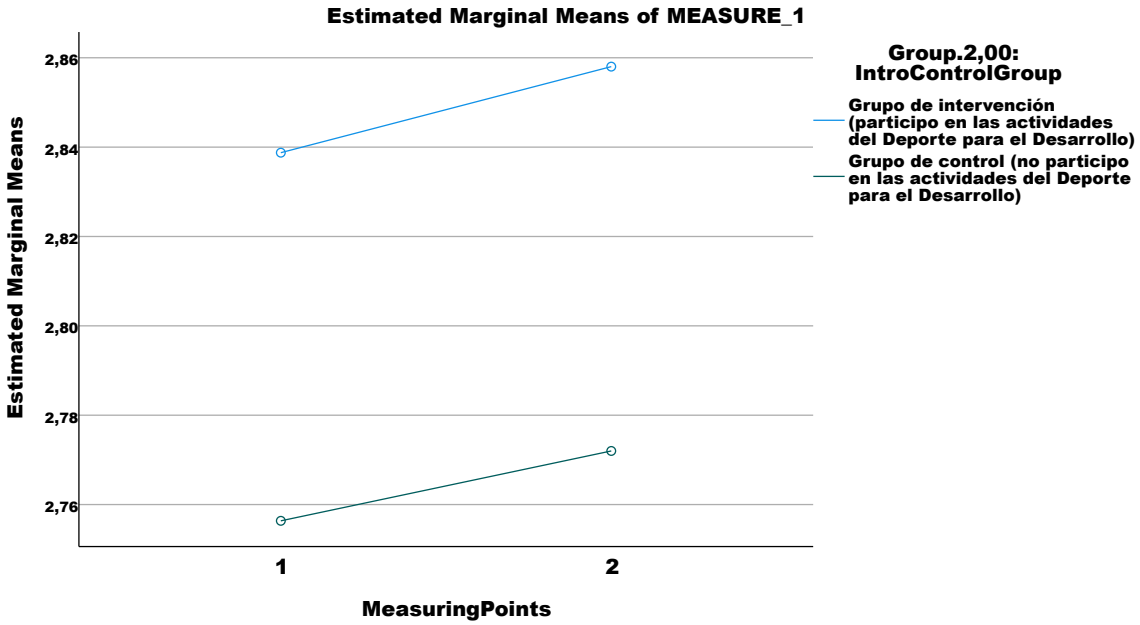

Figure 14

IMPACT ON SELF-CONFIDENCE

To analyze S4D's impact on self-confidence, a scale with 24 Likert scale items was created. Cronbach's Alpha shows good internal consistency of the scale for both baseline and endline with values of 0.725 (baseline) and 0.650 (endline).

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,725	24

Figure 15

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,650	24

Figure 16

Homogeneity of variances was asserted using Levene's Test based on median which shows that equal variances can be assumed in the baseline (p = 0.665) as well as in the endline (p = 0.709).

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
SelfConfidence.1	Based on Mean	,329	1	176	,567
	Based on Median	,188	1	176	,665
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,188	1	173,887	,665
	Based on trimmed mean	,311	1	176	,578
SelfConfidence.2	Based on Mean	,163	1	176	,687
	Based on Median	,140	1	176	,709
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,140	1	169,560	,709
	Based on trimmed mean	,166	1	176	,685

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + IntorControl
Within Subjects Design: MeasuringPoints

Figure 17

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices[a]

Box's M	,719
F	,237
df1	3
df2	1046470,792
Sig.	,871

Figure 18

Checking for homogeneity in covariance in the case of a large sample, as recommended by Mertler (2004), Verma (2015) and Warner (2012), the Box's Test is tested at a 0.001 significance level. The assumption of homogeneity of covariance is violated as p = 0.012. How¬ever, with a large sample size and a balanced design, this assumption can also be neglected.

The assumption of sphericity can be neglected, as this only applies for procedures with measurement repetition with more than two stages. In the present case there are only two measurement points of time.

The mixed between-within ANOVA conducted to assess the impact of Sport for Development on self-confidence across two time periods (pre-intervention, post-intervention) shows that there is no statistically significant interaction between group affiliation and time, Greenhouse-Geisser F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.027, p = 0.869, partial η^2 = 0.000.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
MeasuringPoints	Sphericity Assumed	,021	1	,021	,248	,619	,001
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,021	1,000	,021	,248	,619	,001
	Huynh-Feldt	,021	1,000	,021	,248	,619	,001
	Lower-bound	,021	1,000	,021	,248	,619	,001
MeasuringPoints * IntorControl	Sphericity Assumed	,002	1	,002	,027	,869	,000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,002	1,000	,002	,027	,869	,000
	Huynh-Feldt	,002	1,000	,002	,027	,869	,000
	Lower-bound	,002	1,000	,002	,027	,869	,000
Error(MeasuringPoints)	Sphericity Assumed	14,625	176	,083			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	14,625	176,000	,083			
	Huynh-Feldt	14,625	176,000	,083			
	Lower-bound	14,625	176,000	,083			

Figure 19

It also shows that there is no significant main effect for time, Greenhouse-Geisser F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.248, p = 0.619, partial η^2 = 0.001 – meaning that there are no differences that could be attributed to time alone, regardless of the group membership (intervention or comparison group) of the participants.

There are also no differences between the intervention and comparison group that are in-dependent of the factor time. There is no significant main effect for group, meaning that intervention group and comparison group do not differ significantly, F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.018, p = 0.894, η^2 = 0.000.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	2339,248	1	2339,248	15245,970	<,001	,989
IntorControl	,003	1	,003	,018	,894	,000
Error	27,004	176	,153			

Figure 20

In conclusion, quantitative data shows no statistically significant effect of S4D on self-confidence. Still, there is a positive development in self-confidence of the intervention group, compared to the comparison group. Most likely, a significant effect on self-confidence could be achieved through a longer S4D intervention period.

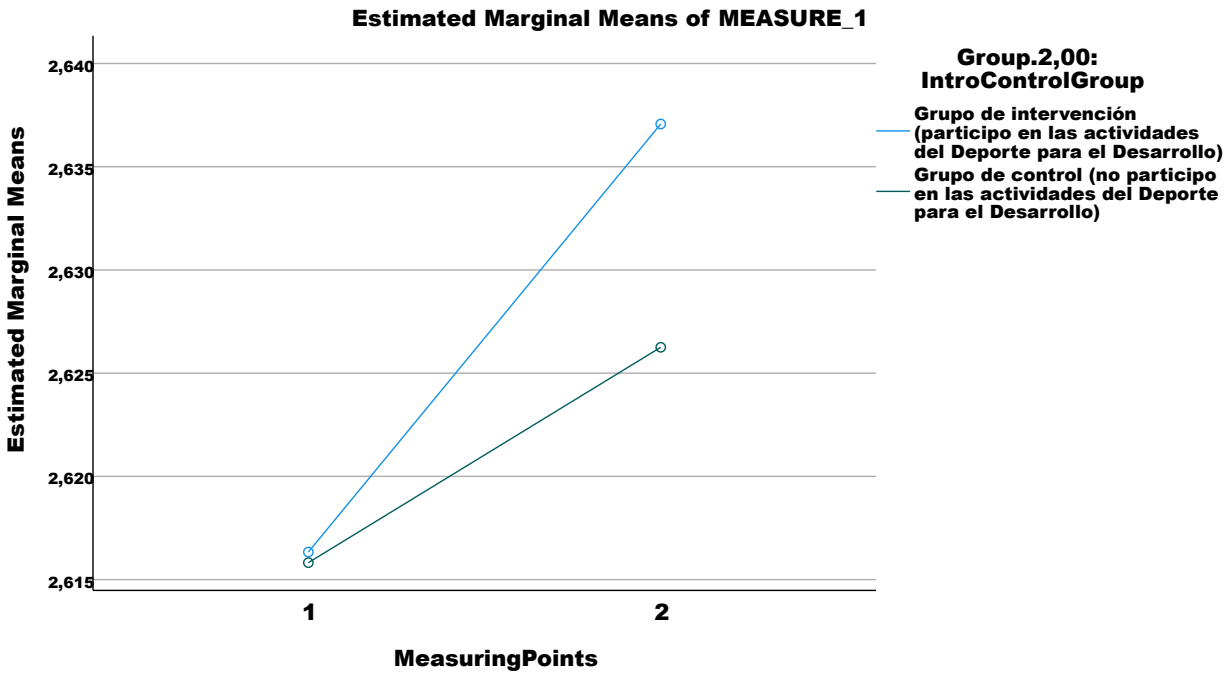

Figure 21

IMPACT ON GOAL ORIENTATION

Goal orientation was measured by creating a scale of 33 variables since goal orientation is a latent construct. Cronbach's Alpha shows very good internal consistency of the scale for both baseline and endline with values of 0.812 (baseline) and 0.774 (endline).

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,812	33

Figure 15

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,774	33

Figure 16

Homogeneity of variances was asserted using Levene's Test based on median which shows that equal variances can be assumed in the baseline (p = 0.283) and in the endline (p = 0.589).

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
GoalOrientation.1	Based on Mean	1,315	1	176	,253
	Based on Median	1,159	1	176	,283
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1,159	1	175,875	,283
	Based on trimmed mean	1,336	1	176	,249
GoalOrientation.2	Based on Mean	,341	1	176	,560
	Based on Median	,292	1	176	,589
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,292	1	175,604	,589
	Based on trimmed mean	,352	1	176	,554

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + IntorControl
Within Subjects Design: MeasuringPoints

Figure 17

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices[a]

Box's M	1,173
F	,386
df1	3
df2	1046470,792
Sig.	,763

Figure 18

Checking for homogeneity in covariance in the case of a large sample, as recommended by Mertler (2004), Verma (2015) and Warner (2012), the Box's Test is tested at a 0.001 significance level. The assumption of homogeneity of covariance is asserted with as p = 0.763. .

The assumption of sphericity can be neglected, as this only applies for procedures with measurement repetition that have more than two stages. In the present case there are only two measurement points of time.

The mixed between-within ANOVA conducted to assess the impact of Sport for Development on goal-orientation across two time periods (pre-intervention, post-intervention) shows in figure 23 that there is no statistically significant interaction between group affiliation and time, Greenhouse-Geisser $F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.005$, $p = 0.945$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.000$.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
MeasuringPoints	Sphericity Assumed	,026	1	,026	,445	,506	,003
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,026	1,000	,026	,445	,506	,003
	Huynh-Feldt	,026	1,000	,026	,445	,506	,003
	Lower-bound	,026	1,000	,026	,445	,506	,003
MeasuringPoints * IntorControl	Sphericity Assumed	,000	1	,000	,005	,945	,000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	,000	1,000	,000	,005	,945	,000
	Huynh-Feldt	,000	1,000	,000	,005	,945	,000
	Lower-bound	,000	1,000	,000	,005	,945	,000
Error(MeasuringPoints)	Sphericity Assumed	10,236	176	,058			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	10,236	176,000	,058			
	Huynh-Feldt	10,236	176,000	,058			
	Lower-bound	10,236	176,000	,058			

Figure 19

There are also no differences between the intervention and comparison group that are in-dependent of the factor time. There is no significant main effect for group, meaning that intervention group and comparison group do not differ significantly, $F(1.00, 176.00) = 0.445$, $p = 0.506$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$.

The following figure shows that there are however differences between the intervention and comparison group that are independent of the factor time. There is a significant main effect for group, meaning that intervention group and comparison group differed significantly, $F(1.00, 176.00) = 4.046$, $p = 0.046$, $\eta^2 = 0.022$. This signifies that the differences observed between the two groups cannot be attributed to the S4D intervention but for example might have been existent even before the intervention.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	2675,805	1	2675,805	17970,908	<,001	,990
IntorControl	,602	1	,602	4,046	,046	,022
Error	26,206	176	,149			

Figure 20

In conclusion, quantitative data demonstrates no statistically significant effect of S4D on goal-orientation among youth. Still, there is a positive development in the goal-orientation competences of the intervention group, compared to the comparison group. One explanation could be that more S4D sessions and a longer implementation period are needed to increase goal-orientation among participants since behavioral changes in general are not realized in the short term.

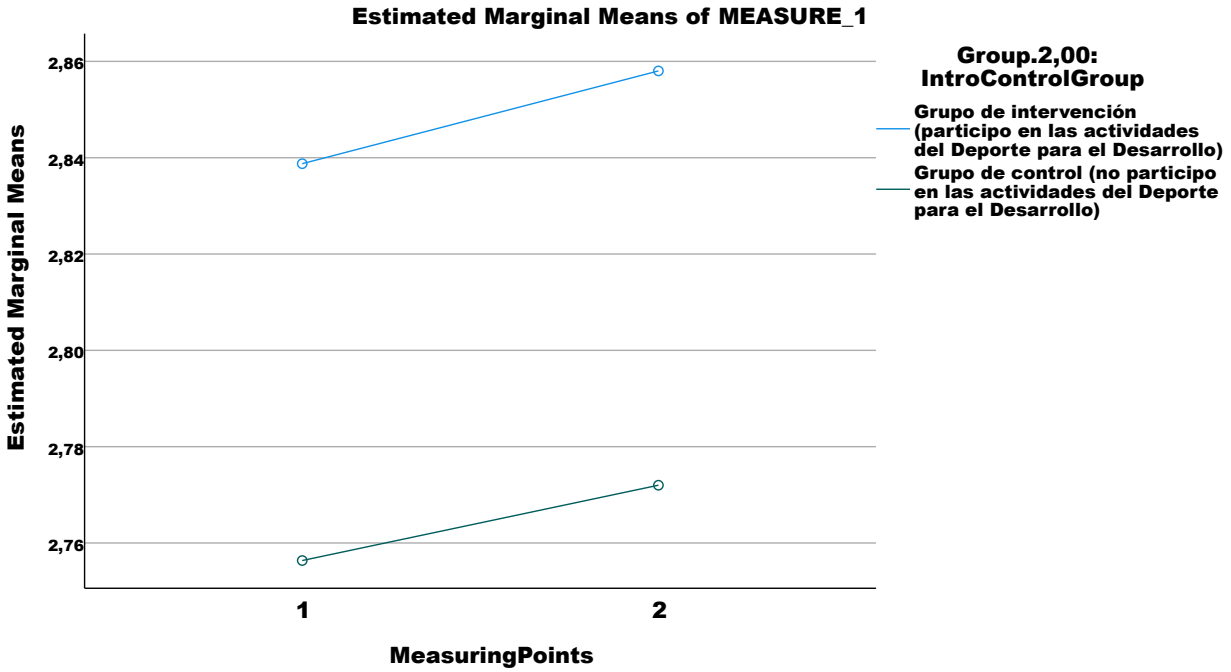

Figure 21

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study faced several limitations that could have impacted the findings. The first limitation was the late training of the coaches, which may have impacted the consistency and quality of the intervention. Coaches were trained just before the intervention started. This delay could have affected the coherence of the training sessions and the delivery of key components to the participants. Furthermore, the early replacement of two coaches introduced additional instability, requiring time for new coaches to integrate and adapt to the program's objectives. These factors likely contributed to variability in the quality of training and could have influenced participant experiences. Future studies should ensure early and consistent training for all coaching staff to maintain a steady and reliable program structure.

Second, there was an inconsistency in the number of training sessions that girls from different schools attended. The number of sessions varied from 24 to 33, meaning some girls had nearly a third fewer sessions than others. This inconsistency arose because in some schools, S4D sessions as an extracurricular activity, slightly overlapped with the official curriculum. In these schools, girls could not attend all S4D sessions. One school prohibited training sessions after a disruptive incident during a friendly match with another school. This discrepancy could lead to uneven development among participants and impact the validity of the results.

Third, many girls joined the program after the baseline, leading to their exclusion from the endline. Additionally, some girls who participated in the pre-evaluation left the program due to parental concerns. Some girls were not allowed to participate in the program because their parents viewed soccer as a boys' sport or were concerned that missing classes for football practice would negatively affect their academic performance. This dropout issue resulted in a high attrition rate for the questionnaire-based data collection. However, real-life attendance at training sessions remained high, suggesting that the questionnaire-based dropout did not necessarily reflect a lack of engagement with the intervention itself.

Fourth, instability caused by changes in school leadership during the year may be a limitation. In four schools, principals or other key administrators were replaced during the program, which led to a disruption in the established structure and responsibility. These shifts often resulted in different personnel overseeing the girls' activities, which created uncertainty and affected the smooth execution of the program. The lack of consistent leadership contributed to challenges in maintaining the planned schedule and could have impacted the girls' continuity and engagement. Addressing these issues requires strategies to ensure stability in the administrative structure and effective communication during transitions, to minimise disruptions in future projects.

Fifth, the technical and logistical challenges encountered during the data collection were a limitation. Slow internet connectivity at some schools led to interruptions, causing questionnaires to be aborted or incomplete and restarted. These technical issues not only delayed the process but also contributed to increased noise and unrest among the participants. At one school, the baseline had to be completed on mobile phones due to equipment limitations, further complicating data collection. In some schools, all girls filled in the questionnaires at the same time and not as initially planned in groups of 15. This contributed to a lack of concentration among some girls

and may have negatively affected the quality of the results. Addressing these limitations in future studies will require improved technical infrastructure, staggered questionnaire completion to reduce network strain, and controlled environments to minimise disruptions during the process.

The sixth limitation is the presence of male spectators during the girls' training sessions which had a noticeable effect. Boys often stood outside watching, making comments and sometimes playing games nearby during the girls' practice. This led to disruptions, as balls from the boys' games would occasionally enter the girls' field, leading to interruptions and a lack of focus. Trainers' attempts to manage this were sometimes ignored. Such behavior likely influenced the girls' training experience and overall performance.

A seventh limitation of the study is the relatively short duration of the program, lasting only six months. This limited time frame may have constrained the development and consolidation of the soft skills. The program might not provide sufficient opportunities for participants to apply newly acquired skills in broader contexts, limiting the overall reach of the training.

An eighth limitation is the absence of a long-term follow-up to measure the program's sustainability and lasting effects. Without continued monitoring and assessment beyond the six-month duration, it is difficult to determine whether the skills and behaviours taught during the program persist over time. This lack of long-term data hinders the ability to evaluate the program's success in fostering enduring change among the participants. Future studies should incorporate extended follow-up periods to gauge the long-term sustainability of the program and to assess whether participants continue to benefit from the skills and experiences gained during the intervention. Ultimately a potential limitation is the challenge in determining whether the development of social skills among participants can be effectively transferred to their social lives. Although the training sessions aim to cultivate specific soft skills, the ability to apply these skills in broader social contexts may not be straightforward. This transfer difficulty can lead to results that are not statistically significant or demonstrable in the expected ways. The disconnect between learned skills in a controlled environment and real-world application can create uncertainty about the broader impact of the intervention.

Addressing these limitations will be crucial for future research. Consideration should be given to the cultural context, the consistency of training, technical quality, intervention length and real-life transfer. Additionally, managing external influences like disruptive behaviour and addressing parental concerns will be key to ensuring the reliability and validity of study outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The findings underscore the importance of an S4D program aimed at enhancing the employability skills of youth. The quantitative analyses indicate a positive trend, although the results are not statistically significant. This is likely due to two factors: the short duration of the intervention and the high drop-out rates among students participating in the survey, which reveal a methodological weakness in the study design. Given the short intervention period of just six months, these results are quite noteworthy. Achieving behavioral changes and translating knowledge from theory into practice requires both time and continuous engagement.

Despite the lack of statistical significance, the results remain important in a descriptive sense because they highlight positive trends and patterns that suggest the program is making a difference. These trends provide valuable insights into how the program impacts youth employability skills, indicating potential benefits that may become more pronounced with longer intervention periods and improved study designs. Thus, the findings offer a foundation for further research and program refinement.

Conducting impact studies in the field of S4D, and particularly regarding Sport for Employability, provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of S4D programs in achieving desired outcomes. While anecdotal evidence and theoretical frameworks suggest that sport can enhance employability skills, rigorous research provides concrete data to support these claims. This validation is important for gaining the support of policymakers, funders, and other stakeholders who may be sceptical about the value of sport in achieving development goals.

Understanding the specific mechanisms through which sport influences employability is critical for refining and improving S4D programs. Impact studies can reveal the pathways through which sport activities translate into skill development, allowing program designers to emphasize the most effective elements. Moreover, impact studies contribute to the broader field of developmental research by providing insights into the complex interplay between physical activities and social outcomes. This interdisciplinary knowledge can inform a wide range of programs beyond sport, including education, health, and community development initiatives.

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World Bank 2024a Mexico | World Bank Gender Data Portal

World Bank 2024b Population, female (% of total population) - Mexico | Data (worldbank.org)

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