

PERSPECTIVES ON THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN THE 3RD LEAGUE, ROMANIA

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Abstract. *The issue of the components of sport training has been a point of interest in the work of sport researchers since the second half of the 20th century. Studying the literature, we find that, although totally different in terms of objectives, level of physical performance, training conditions, socio-economic status, etc., the three dimensions of football (professional, semi-professional and amateur) are intertwined in the issue of training planning. In this paper we aimed to analyse the situation of a semi-professional team (from the 3rd league in Romania), the psycho-socio-economic profile of the players and where they stand in terms of physical training, and what are their perspectives on it. The aspects discussed by the authors include physical, technical, tactical, psychological and theoretical training. In recent times, the game of football has changed, and we can say that the perspective on its preparation has also evolved. Thus, the approach to training means has changed in recent years. In recent scholarly works, authors look at football training as a whole and training means are no longer seen as having a single purpose, but as exercises having characteristics from each component. This is due, on the one hand, to the increasing complexity of the game of football and, on the other hand, to the cramming of competitive periods.*

Keywords: *training components, strength and conditioning, semi-professional level, 3rd division, football.*

Introduction

Starting the second half of the 20th century, the study of training was a point of interest for many authors. Many aspects were under research, involving the components of training, periodization, the management of teams and so on. After analysing the published data, we notice the psychological, social and economic aspects influence the training. Also, we remark that the training should be adapted regarding these factors. Even if it is very clear that a top European team haven't got the same features as a Romanian 3rd Division team, we couldn't point any training methodology adapted for a lower lever tier. In this paper we aim to identify some psychological, social and economic features of a 3rd Division team in the purpose to design a strength and conditioning methodology regarding their needs.

Training components

The issue of the components of sports training has been a point of interest in the work of researchers in the field since the second half of the 20th century. Over time, many authors have turned their attention to this topic – Weineck (1983), Manno (1994), Ozolin (1972), Dragnea (1996), Dragnea & Teodorescu (2002), Cârstea (2000) etc. The concepts presented by the authors are mainly directed towards the following components of sport training:

Physical training assesses this component as referring to "the means and methods governing the activity of developing conditional and coordinative motor skills, and the effort capacity". (Rusu et al, 2009) Technical training defines it as "the totality of motor actions ideally executed in terms of their efficiency", while Manno (1994) considers the technique "a procedure or a set of procedures, learned through exercise, in order to solve as economically, rationally and with maximum efficiency a given task based on movement". (Dragnea, 1996)

Among the components of the technique, we highlight (Teodorescu, 2010): the technical element - a fundamental structure underlying the practice of a sport (kicking at goal in football), the technical process - a concrete motor structure or a particular way of performing a technical element (passing the ball with the inside of the foot - in football), style - is the particular way (personal imprint) of carrying out a technical procedure (the scorpion dive for the goalkeeper's position, first executed by the player Rene Higuita), the basic mechanism of the technical procedure - is the logical sequence of motor acts, objectively necessary for its efficient execution; Tactical preparation considers tactics as "the art of conducting the contest with the opponent".(Ozolin, 1972) Tactics brings together a system of principles, ideas, and rules for the athlete's approach to competitions, through which he uses all his technical, physical, and mental capabilities to solve problematic situations (of competition) created by opponents, teammates, and environment. (Teodorescu, 2010)

As psychological training, the authors classify psychological training as "a factor, a component of sports training, as a field of applied psychology, and is related to pedagogical and biological sciences". (Rusu et al., 2009) Theoretical training is the set of specialized knowledge transmitted by the coach in order to apply in practice notions, principles, rules aimed at optimizing performance in training and competitions.

The game of football has changed in recent years, and similarly we can say that the perspective on its preparation has evolved (Morgans et al., 2014; Reilley, 2005). It is still topical and valid the division by components made by the aforementioned authors, but the perspective on training means has changed in recent years. In recent scholarly works, authors view football training as a whole. Also, the training means are no longer seen as having a single purpose: exercises for physical, technical, tactical training, etc., but exercises with characteristics of each component. This is due on the one hand to the increasing complexity of the game of football and on the other, to the crowding of competitive periods. (Morgans et al., 2014)

Integrated physical training

Studying the literature, we find that, although totally different in terms of objectives, level of physical performance, training conditions, socio-economic status, the three dimensions of football (professional, semi-professional and amateur) are intertwined in the issue of training planning. All three areas are under the same constraint – the time pressure. On the one hand, a top team "never" has time for sufficient training due to the density of sporting competitions and friendly matches they have to play¹.

As observed, the distance between the resumption of training and the first official game is quite short (6 weeks). At the same time, the author proposes, for the professional level, no less than seven friendly games during this period. Moreover, two of these games are in the first 13 days of preparation (day 9 and day 13). We can therefore already see from this preparatory stage the high density of games, which trains the athletes precisely for the specifics of the competitions to come. Thus, the time constraint is present in a professional team.

On the other hand, in a semi-professional team, at least in Romania, there is no question of a very busy competition calendar. Romanian football teams only play in the domestic league (e.g., 3rd League) and in the first rounds of the Romanian Cup. The specific situation of semi-professional teams is due, on the one hand, to the lack of means of recovery and, on the other hand, to the fact that, in addition to sports training, the players carry out other activities that are physically and intellectually demanding (another job).

¹ For marketing reasons or various charitable events. E.g. F.C. Barcelona: Sunday, 21.08.2022 vs Real Sociedad (2nd round, La Liga); Wednesday, 24.08.2022 vs Manchester City (charity match); Sunday, 28.08.2022 vs Valladolid (3rd round, La Liga).

Romero and Tous (2011) also state that injuries are simply events that occur as a result of systematic physical activity. Of course, preventive action can be taken to reduce the risk, but the aetiological factors cannot be combated. Moreover, they shown that the injury incidence rate for any sport is valid according to a formula that determines the total number of hours of practice. Thus, it will be calculated: Duration of a game X number of players on the field X number of games in a stage X number of stages in the tournament - e.g. For the Romanian 3rd league, regular season, we have 1.5 (h- duration of a game) X 22 (2 teams of 11 players) X 5 (games in each stage) X 18 (stages) = 2970 h of exposure. This result is the number of exposure hours in the competition. During training days, the number of players X duration (in hours) of training is calculated. Bahr & Maelhum (2007) deduced the number of injuries during national team training between 2-8/ 1000 training hours. At the same time, Cos et al., (2010) calculate 9 injuries/ 1000 hours of training and competition in the game of football - club teams. From his formula, correlating with an average number of 25 players in a football team and an average duration of 1.5h/training, it means that a weekly training cycle with 5 training sessions includes 187.5 hours of exposure. Thus, per week, statistically, 1.6 injuries will occur. Obviously, the number is very high, apparently. The term "injury" is used to refer to any phenomenon that causes a player to be unable to complete a training session or competition.

At the same time, in practice, it is known that at the level of the 3rd league the means of prevention, recovery or recuperation are almost non-existent. Very rarely does a team in this level benefit from optimal conditions in these areas. Correlating the above, we can identify the easiest way to reduce the number of injuries - decreasing the exposure time. Thus, in a context forced by circumstances, there will not be enough time to train semi-professional players either.

This creates the need to work in an integrated way on all components of sports training, regardless of the level of performance. One of the most widely used means of integrated training in the game of football is called "small side game" (SSG). Gimenez et al. (2018), consider SSG a special means with strong variation options for incorporating all components of training. Thus, the authors note the possibility of varying parameters such as the size of the playing space, the number of players, the work/rest ratio, the number and size of goals, the action of goalkeepers, the maximum number of touches, the presence and type of addresses coming from the coaches. Aguiar et al. (2012) also note in the category of variable parameters during SSG the possibility of changing the rules during the game. In support of the fact that SSG integrates all the elements of training we have the paper of Dellal et al. (2008) who observe that in 2v2 and 8v8 games, against the background of tactical elements the development of cardio-respiratory endurance also takes place. Aspects were also supported previously by Impellizzeri et al. (2006) who did not observe in their study differences between cardio-respiratory parameters affected by classical (isolated) or SSG exercises, the development being the same.

Psycho-socio-economic characteristics of football players

Analysing the scientific work in the field, we note that, in addition to the motor dimension, three main elements create the profile of football players: psychological, social, and economic aspects.

The issue of involving psychology in sport has been studied for almost two centuries (Lochbaum et al., 2022). Meta-analysis of the literature (Lochbaum et al., 2022) highlights the implications of psychological aspects in the performance sport. For example, joint adherence in performing the same tasks, increased self-efficacy (determined by willpower) are considered broad, scientifically proven elements that have effects on performance in sport. The level of psychological aspects including intrinsic motivation, determination, dedication, persistence, creativity have been identified as correlated with sport performance. (Michie, 2009)

Motivation of athletes is a state that varies depending on various factors, and can

influence positively or negatively the sports performance (Urena-Lopera et al., 2020). This has been studied extensively and different theories have been developed such as the Goal Attainment Theory (Nicholls, 1989) and the Self-Discipline Theory (Deci et al., 2012). Many coaches try to achieve the best performance with their teams and among the factors that maximize performance are the psychological and emotional aspects of the players (Abenza et al., 2014). For a coach knowing the motivational level of his athletes is essential in mapping out training tasks. As Keegan et al. (2014) points out, both the coach and the athlete need to understand the connection between psychological and technical/tactical aspects in training. It is important that they understand and use in trainings the link between technical, tactical, and psychological aspects of training. It should also be noted that, compared to the Romanian authors, the physical factor (*conditioning aspect/physical training*) is included in technical and tactical training, with the psychological aspects taking precedence.

Escolano-Perez et al. (2014) describes the team sports environment as volitional, collective, open, dynamic and, therefore, an environment in which a special emphasis falls on knowledge skills, at the same level as technical and tactical ones. Fernandez-Macias et al. (2016) notes that anxiety changes its value during both training and competition. The level of competitive anxiety should be taken into account as there are multiple studies that rate how negatively it influences performance, even leading to athlete drop-out (Gonzalez-Campos et al., 2015). It is recommended to work on managing anxiety during training so that it is even better managed in competition, so that athletes will be able to tackle stressful situations during the match more easily (Uphill et al., 2012). The link between anxiety and motivation is highlighted by Khalila (2015), noting that an increased level of intrinsic motivation can help athletes manage stress and anxiety, as it is a moderator of the relationship between anxiety and academic performance. Garcia-Mas et al. (2015) also encourages coaches to provide a motivationally conducive climate during training, as this will act as a binder towards competitive stress, and at the same time, an optimal motivational climate precedes the proper mastery of a training task. The study conducted by Olmedilla et al. (2017) shows us that among players under 18 years old, footballers have the best level of motivation, concentration, self-confidence, self-esteem, and stress control. Also, again, it highlights the relationship between strong motivation and effective stress management. At the same time, the adaptation of the motivation approach to the experience of the football players, the adaptation of the working time and the means used and the analysis of the feedback received should be followed in training (Hoka & Hein, 2005).

In their study, Amiot et al. (2014) observes that, paradoxically at least, motivation levels decrease when a competition approaches. This can be explained by the fact that the athlete places too much importance on achieving the result and not on the fact that he feels additional stress due to the acquisition of new technical elements. On the other hand, there are also studies that show that in competition motivation increases - not in high performance competitions, but competitions including medical recovery exercises (Gorsic et al., 2017). We can thus conclude that as a high-stakes sports competition approaches, anxiety increases and motivation decreases. To be able to manage this phenomenon it is essential to know the level of both. An interesting aspect related to motivation is described by Reinboth & Duda (2006) who observe that the level of intrinsic motivation does not vary according to the position in a team. This can be explained as a consequence of the fact that the method by which a coach manages to motivate his athletes is more important than their personal traits. Therefore, an appropriately chosen training method that motivates athletes will succeed in counteracting the motivational gaps they have. In addition, this can also be linked to the atmosphere of the whole team; in a favourable environment it will be much easier for all athletes to adapt and increase their own motivational level. An initial level of motivation will be increased after the involvement of different motivational elements in training. At the same time, an inverse correlation is seen in

the study of González-Hernández et al. (2018) who observe a decrease in academic performance as motivation decreases. Moreover, Rilley (2005) observes a correlation between low motivation and extra pounds in athletes. This has direct implications for physical performance, with an athlete's positioning within specific weight limits being a factor in positive outcomes.

With regard to the social aspects, it is essential to remember that the football team itself is a group, but that in turn, it carries out its activity in various social contexts. A team is defined as a group of individuals with specific roles and responsibilities who interact adaptively, interdependently and dynamically for a common goal and who are involved in an organisational system with boundaries and linkages to a larger system governed by tasks (Salas et al., 2005). Subjects in a performance sports team include athletes, coaches, medical and scientific staff who constantly seek ways in which to improve the performance and health of the athletes they work with (Odetoyinbo, 2019). Arnold et al. (2016) argues that age, experience, and individual performance levels are associated with team performance levels in a broad context of social factors. These are also potential barriers to effective team functioning. In team sport, hierarchies need to be established. At the same time, it is noted that the cultural element can hardly be separated from the social one. The creators of culture are social beings and the culture they create is based on their social relations.

On the economic aspects of sport, Segui-Urbaneja et al. (2022) consider that the economic situation of a country has an influence on the achievement of the objectives by national federations and thus on the sustainability of sport and that it directly influences active practitioners. The link between investment efficiency and success in sport has been analysed in the literature. Nations are investing more and systematically, and the number of high-level sportswomen is increasing considerably (Truyens et al., 2014).

Problem statement

The tasks of this scientific approach were to highlight:

- Socio-psychological characteristics of the players in the target-study group and their economic profile;
- Target group athletes' perspective on physical training.

Research questions

- Is the group of players homogenous from a psycho-socio-economic point of view?
- Do players see physical training as a core component of training?

Purpose of the study

The aim of the study is to identify the psycho-social and economic characteristics of football players in the study group and their perspective on strength and conditioning in the further aim to design an adapted strength and conditioning methodology.

Material and methods

Considering the psycho-socio-economic aspects highlighted in the literature and the fact that they directly influence the level of performance and the way athletes act, we considered it appropriate to apply a survey on these aspects.

In this paper the questionnaire was distributed to a single football team in the 3rd League, Romania. Thus, we are talking about a case study at the semi-professional football level in Romania. Future research will be necessary to have even more pertinent conclusions and to be able to generalize to the whole level of semi-professional football in Romania.

Questionnaire applied to a group of 22 players. Of these 21 gave their consent to participate - this was given verbally. Only one person in the group said they "can't write", which we are hesitant to accept as true, but will of course, record as a refusal. In the case of minors, parental

consent was also sought verbally. Athletes did not study the questionnaire beforehand and were given information about it and its purpose on the spot.

The questions were written in accessible, sometimes informal language so as not to trigger reluctance on the part of the athlete. There was also the option of an open-ended response to most, to give the opportunity for wider, free expression if this was desired.

Questions 1-6 aimed at compiling a sociological and sociological profile in a football context (1-Your age, 2- Marital status, 3- Pace of birth, 4 -Your last form of education completed, 5-Please give a brief history of the teams where you have played so far, including the level of competition, including during your junior years, 6 - Your mother's last form of education completed).

Items 7 - 15 looked at the psychological profile and identification of motivational factors, both for participation in training and competition (7- *I like to participate in the current football team's training*, 8- *What I like most about the team's training is*, 9- *What I like least about training is*, 10- *What I like most when we have a match is that*, 11- *What I dislike most when we have a match is that*, 12- *If I train diligently, I would like to transfer to a team that plays in*, 13- *The main reason why I play competitive football at the current team*, 14- *Most in football activity, I get support from*, 15- *From the list below I had disputes with*).

Questions 16-22 dealt with economic aspects to define the player's profile (16- *Do you currently receive financial compensation for playing football?* 17 - *What is the form of financial commitment*, 18 - *During your career, have you had any delays (arrears) in the payment of your financial rights?* 19 - *Apart from football, do you carry out any other activity from which you make a financial profit*, 20 - *If you compare the financial gains from your football activity with the work you do in training and competitions, do you consider that you are sufficiently rewarded?* 21 - *I think I can play football for about: (years)*, 22 - *After the end of my playing career, I would like to have the following profession*).

Through items 23- 31 we wanted to analyse the players' perspective on physical training (23 - *I think the main aspect of the preparation where my team suffers is the training*, 24 - *That aspect of training could be improved if*, 25 - *I consider physical training as important for the success of a football team*, 26 - *At this moment, how important do you think it is for your team to improve its level of physical training*, 27 - *Do you consider that a physical trainer, who can apply specific training programs, specifically dedicated to your team, would help the progress of the players?*, 28 - *As an aspect of physical training, I most dislike the following exercises*, 29- *As an aspect of physical training, I most like the following exercises*, 30- *How many serious injuries do you think you have had so far*, 31 - *In those cases, what treatment did you receive and who paid for it?*. The last topic included final aspects, which the players had the opportunity to mention in a personal way - 32 - *Do you think there are other relevant aspects of Football in 3rd League that should be discussed?*

Results

Sociological profile

The age range of the athletes is 13 - 30 years, with an average of 23.1 years and a median of 24 years. The youngest player is therefore 13 years old. For reasons of anonymisation of the questionnaire, we do not know when he will turn 14, so although he does not have the right to play in a senior league, we will consider him from the research point of view as a "3rd league player" because he regularly participates in training and will certainly make his debut after his 14th birthday².

2 The trend of decreasing age of debut in the 3rd league has been extended in recent years. Currently the youngest player to make his debut in the 3rd league was at that time 14 years and 1 month old. <https://liga2.prosport.ro/liga-3/gol-dat-in-liga-3-la-14-ani-alexandru-butu-a-inscris-pentru-ghiroda-in->

Note that if we remove the youngest player from the group, the average would become 23.6 years. Thus, we conclude that, although wide in distribution, the group covers all ages and is relatively evenly distributed. This is also confirmed by the numerical criterion, for the values between 17 and 30 years, the only ones not covered are 20 and 28 years. (figure 1)

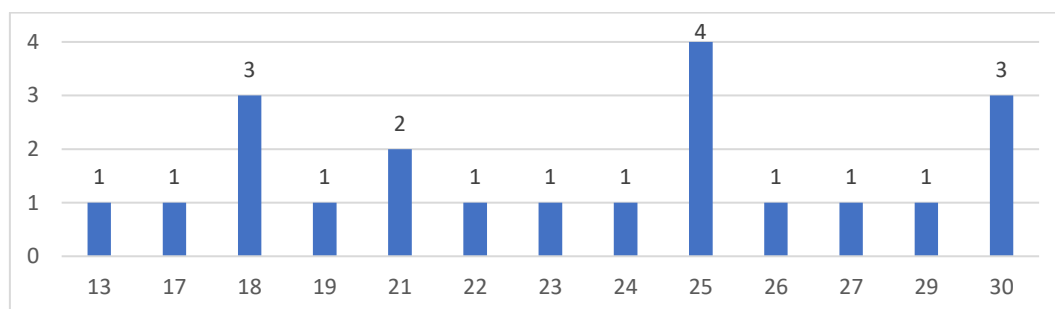


Fig. 1. Age of the athletes

Next, we look at the place of origin. Although a 3rd league team, there are two players born outside Romania. This becomes even more interesting to note as only one player is born in the countryside. It should be noted, however, that the team under study operates in urban areas. (table 1)

Table 1. Origins of football players

Bucharest	Other county	International
16 players	3 (Dâmbovița, Bacău, Botoșani)	2 (Republic of Ireland, Germany)

Table 2. Players' relationship status

Single	Cohabitation	Relationship	Not married	Married
5	6	4	5	1

With regard to the players' studies, we note that they have a favourable academic background. For the majority their age coincides with the maximum possible academic path at that time. There are 4 players under 19 years of age who state that they have only finished secondary school, one who has finished high school, 4 players aged 22 years or less have finished high school and 9 players completed higher education studies, one of whom has a Master's degree. The fact that 42% have completed higher education is a point to note. From the data we have, only three athletes have not continued their university studies, despite their age (25, 27, respectively 30 years). (figure 2)

victoria-clara-din-play-off-cu-chisineu-cris-si-a-devenit-cel-mai-tanar-marcator-al-tarii-din-liga-3-19268789. There are also other cases reported <https://liga2.prosport.ro/liga-3/video-moment-istoric-in-fotbalul-romanesc-frati-gemeni-au-debutat-in-liga-3-la-14-ani-sunt-copiii-unui-fost-antrenor-de-la-csm-slatina-si-fcsb-19270153>

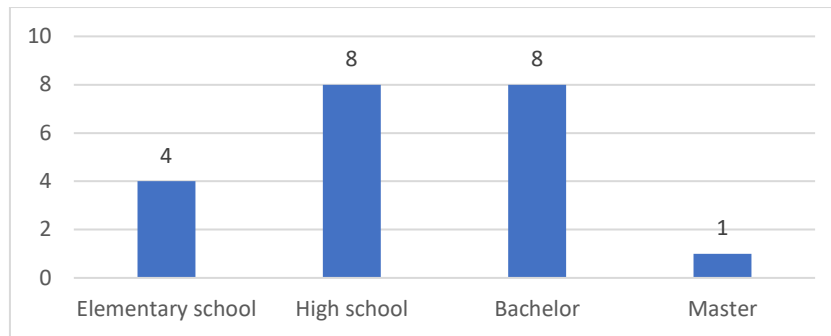


Fig. 2. Academic level of players

Also, looking at the academic background of the mothers, we see that 12/21 have completed a bachelor's degree (57%). Only one person has a secondary education, but she is the mother of the only athlete with a master's degree! (Obviously, possibly the only one also due to his age).

On the football path, it is worth noting that we have 5 non-responses. We don't know the causes that led to this action, but it can be anticipated by looking at other answers. There are players with a long career, sometimes marked by returns to the same teams. Probably also the path of these players has been a winding one, or upon which they simply do not want to elaborate. What is important to note is that of the players over 22, none of them played their junior years at their current club. Out of 9 players under 22.7 played at the same club.

From a sociological point of view, we are dealing with a group distributed homogeneously over a wide age range, containing both minors under 14 years old and adults in their 30s. The academic profile is particularly good, with high aspirations, correlated with the academic profile of the mother, mainly a higher education graduate. It is also noticeable that the players in the second half of the age group come from different junior clubs, but the youngest come from the present club.

Psychological profile

The first observation is related to the fact that 15/21 athletes stated that they really enjoy participating in the football team training. 5 athletes said a lot and one said neither a lot nor a little. Regarding the reason why they like the training sessions, 71% of them say "because I play football". At the same time, we also note that 23% say they like it because it is a source of income. This can be related to the negative aspects of coaching - 47% say they most dislike the fact that coaching is not properly supported financially. (Figure 3)

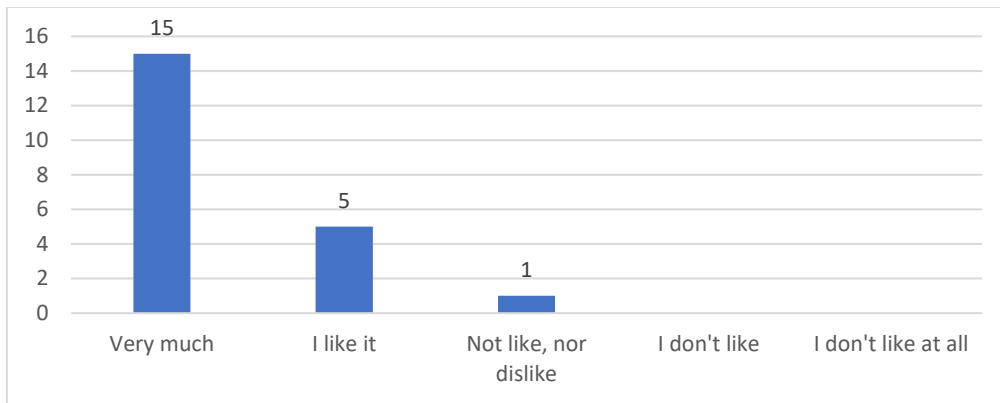


Fig. 3. Player's like or dislike regarding participation into training

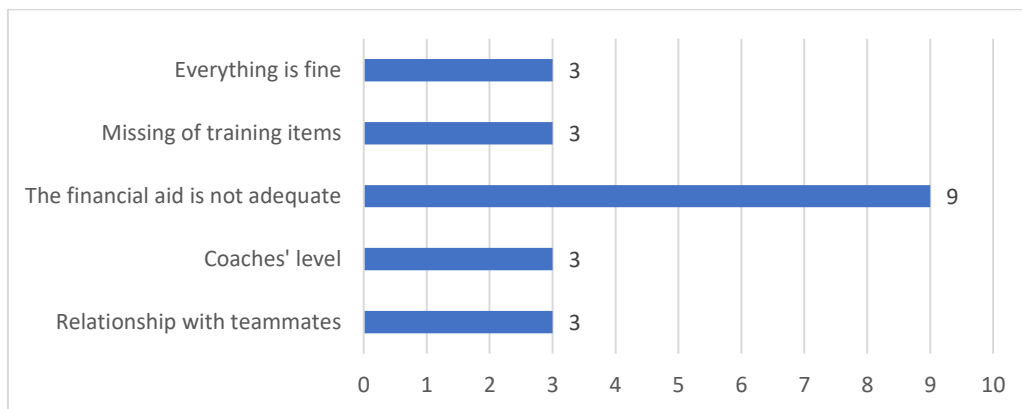


Fig. 4. Negative aspects regarding training

With regard to the competition, we notice a very great openness towards externalisation. Players seem very happy to share their previously expressed desire to play with those around them - 38% say they enjoy having family/friends come to watch them and a further 38% say they enjoy having spectators in the stands watching them.

On the negative side, the general aspect is related to the disappointment that "nobody comes to see them". 61% consider the most striking negative aspect to be the fact that family/friends do not come to see them or that there are no spectators in the stands. It is also worth noting that 19% consider that it upsets them most that they do not get a bonus.

Regarding the players' aspirations we see two main groups - those who want to play in League 1 (10/21 people) and those who want to play in a very strong European league - England, Spain, Italy, Germany (8/21). We also note two players who indicated exactly which team they would like to go to.

The question with the clearest response tendency in this group was related to the reason why they play football, the answer in 18/21 cases being "for passion". 6 athletes (28% indicating financial gain). Further, 12/21 state that it is their family that supports them most in their sporting activity, but at the same time 7/21 consider that they support themselves. (Figure 5)

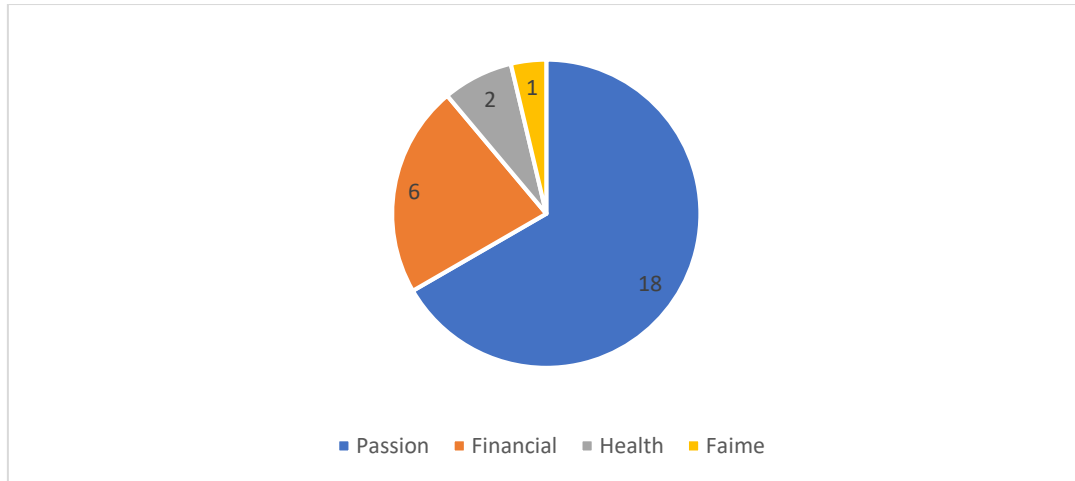


Fig. 5 Reasons for practicing football

In relation to disputes we note that half (11/21) say they have not had any disputes. The others have had disputes either with their opponents, with the spectators, club or with all categories.

Analysing the above, we see that on a psychological level we have a group that is extremely passionate about what they do. Involvement could be total, in the presence of an even greater financial contribution. The players want the support of the supporters and resent when they do not come to the matches. Moreover, players feel supported by family and friends when they come to see them. Also notable is the fact that, although not necessarily high, all players have an aspiration, league 1 or La Liga in Spain, Premier League in England, Bundesliga in Germany etc.

Economic profile

Further analysis of the players' incomes shows a wide distribution. We have in the group 7 players with incomes above 4000 RON, but at the same time 3 players with no income and one below 1000 RON. Remarkably, although they have such different incomes, the general tendency is to think that work is not sufficiently rewarded (65%). (Figure 6)

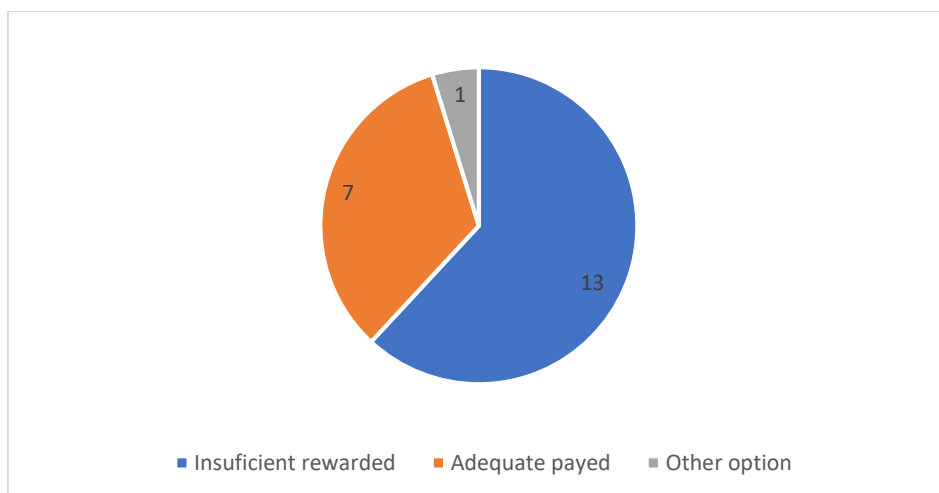


Fig. 6. Return work/ earnings

A total of 66% say that they have had salary arrears, the majority of them over 30 days. As a form of employment, 7 of them work with a fixed-term individual employment contract and 10 with a sports activity contract. 33% also work in another economically remunerated activity, for 2 of them, football is the secondary activity in terms of income. As for future professions, the majority (57%) want to go into sport (coach, physiotherapist, etc.), 28% did not answer and 15% into other fields (business, engineering, etc.). (Figure 7)

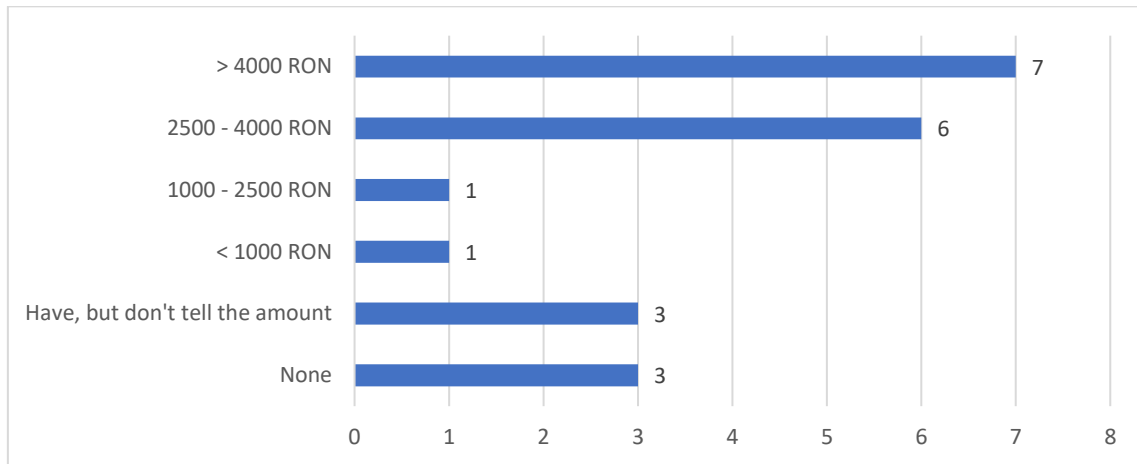


Fig. 7. Financial earnings

Perspectives on fitness

This is perhaps the area where we see the clearest tendency to have an unanimously accepted opinion. 17/21 responses indicate physical training as very important, 3 as important and we also note one non-response. (Figure 8)

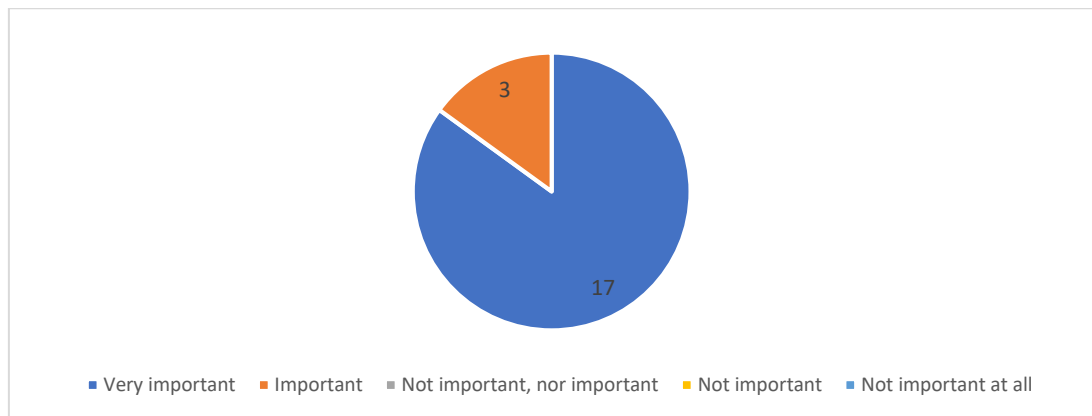


Fig. 8. Importance of strength and conditioning

Furthermore, more than 50% consider that it would be very important at this time for the team to improve its level of physical preparation. 2 players state that it would be neither important nor unimportant. Looking at the components of training, more than 50% consider that the group is the most deficient in psychological training.

Perhaps the most surprising answer of the entire questionnaire is given to the question "Would a physical trainer who would apply physical training programs specifically dedicated to your team, help the progress of the players?" - we have 21/21 (100%!) answers "Yes, because

he is a specialist in the field". (Figure 9)

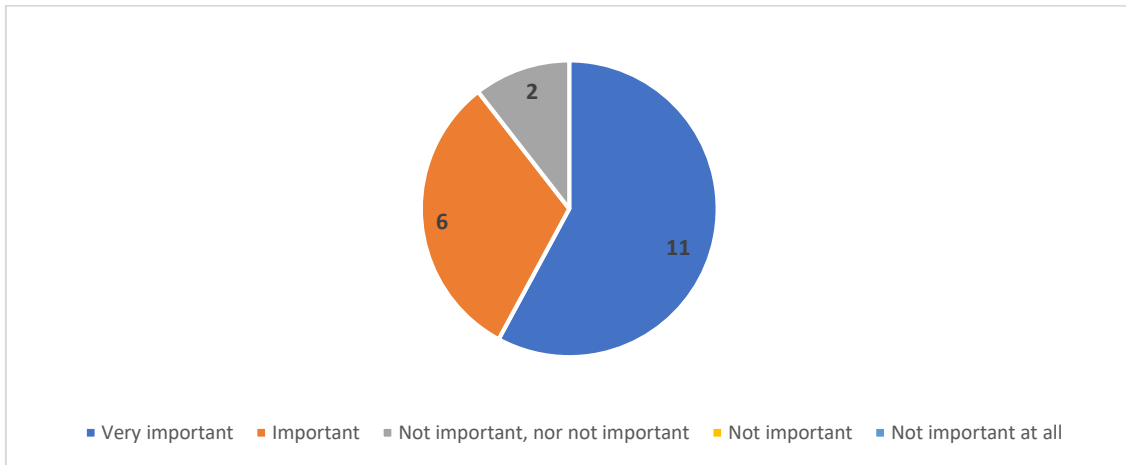


Fig.9. Importance of improving the level of strength and conditioning

Regarding the means of training, it is generally observed that players do not like exercises without a ball ("endurance", "stairs", "chunks") but prefer those with a ball and coming from the specifics of strength-speed ("short runs thought similar to a match", "physical strength", "football with stakes"). (Table 10)

Table 3. Agreed and disliked drills during training

Agreed drills	Disliked drills
Gym practice	Running on the stairs
All strength and conditioning drills	Endurance runs
Shooting drills	Long run
Stake drills	Reps
Drill for strength	Drills without ball
Possession drills	Drills over hurdles
Small side games	Any kind of run
Intermittent drills	

Discussion and Conclusions

Summing up the above, we note that although the age of the players is very different (13-30 years), many psycho-socio-economic aspects resemble them. Also, although geographically, most of them come from the same city, we cannot consider that "it is the same" city and the same environment, the one where the athlete born in 2010 or the one born in 1993 grew up.

We note the academic aspirations of the group, coupled with the desire to develop both in their sporting and professional careers. Moreover, we notice players who are currently working in business environments or in the future want to get there.

The group is particularly homogeneous in terms of willingness to participate in training. Most of them do it out of passion and really enjoy it. All this even though financially they are not happy with the income they earn. Some of the athletes also do other activities to make a living, some of them even better paid than football.

This is a group that responds well to exogenous motivational factors - they want the support of family, friends, and supporters. Players are affected when the public does not come

to the stadium or when the coach does not send them out as much as they would like.

We also note that, in addition to the fact that incomes are considered insufficient, in their careers, most of them have also experienced late payments. However, passion remains at the forefront and they continue to play football. Moreover, most of them claim that they will continue to play it for many years to come (average playing age 36.1 years, correlated with the average age of the group currently 23.1 years).

Physical training is viewed with confidence and openness. Mostly it is seen as an element that helps to improve and that the group needs. Moreover, the physical training specialist is unanimously accepted by the group and his/her academic merits are recognised. This also correlates with the psychological and social aspects highlighted. A new person, with an academic profile, who will provide moral support and be with the team, will certainly be well integrated and accepted.

In conclusion, at the level of the 3rd league, in Romania, although we have a different age group, with players who were formed in other political periods, the group retains its psycho-social homogeneity. The desire to perform is increased, the motivation is there, despite all the economic impediments. The financial aspects give an inhomogeneous characteristic to the team, but the perspective on them is mostly accepted - income is below merit. This may also be a new cohesive factor within the group.

At the component level of training, physical training is understood to be beneficial. And, correlated with the academic profile of players, the physical training specialist is viewed with optimism. Athletes tend to want integrated exercises, which is fully in line with the trend mentioned in the literature. Players also value the other components of training - psychological, technical, and tactical training.

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