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NATIONAL ATHLETES' PERCEIVED IMAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS IN MALAYSIA

DANIAL BIN AZIZAN DURISIC

50 Pages

Malaysian national sports depend on the support of the government to further improve its quality and continue to grow. The declining quality of Malaysian sports prompted this study, which seeks to explore the perceptions of the Malaysian government's sport development efforts through the lens of the national athletes and provide recommendations that could lead to strengthened sports development and improved quality of sports in Malaysia. This research intends to compare the results obtained from current and former national athletes and compare it with the Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success or SPLISS Model (Bosscher et al., 2006), which identified nine pillars that influence elite sporting success and main issues in Malaysian sports. The nine pillars are financial support, integrated approach to policy development, sport participation, talent identification and development system, athletic and post career support, training facilities, coaching provision and coach development, national and international competitions, and scientific research and sports medicine support. The main issues identified in Malaysian sports include lack of management skills, incompetency of sport administrators, lack of financial aids, corruption, and involvement of politicians in sports (Fiah et al., 2014). This study will provide a foundation of research on sports development in Malaysia due to the dearth of research on this topic. The results revealed eight main themes along with one recommendation. The themes were nothing, adequate competition opportunities, financial incentives, with a subtheme of insufficient financial support, good access to the NSI, adequate

physical resources, high quality coaching, lack of post career support, and increased funding and exposure while one recommendation was improved communication. When compared to the SPLISS model, the government is providing good support in most of the pillars. When compared to the main issues in Malaysian sports and recommendation from previous studies, this study did not yield the same results, although was highlighted by some of the athletes.

KEYWORDS: Government support, national athletes, SPLISS model, sports development

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DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS IN MALAYSIA

DANIAL BIN AZIZAN DURISIC

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
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DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS IN MALAYSIA

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Sports have been an integral part of Malaysia's culture, dating back to the 15th century. Before the British invaded Malaysia, the sports culture in Malaysia had the influence of animism, a belief that spirits exist in humans and animate objects (Omar et al., 2010). Sports that had an influence of animism during the pre-colonial British era in Malaysia were "silat"; a martial art involving meditation and spiritual development, wau (kite-flying), gasing (top-spinning), and cockfighting (Omar et al., 2010). In the 19th century, modern sports were introduced by the British to create rapport between the British and the people of Malaya (the nation of Malaysia before it was established in 1963) (Othman, 2007). The British brought the Chinese and the Indians to work in different industries in Malaysia, and with that, their own culture (Omar et al., 2010). The Chinese worked in tin mines which were located in town centers, the Indians in rubber plantations which were located in rural areas, and the Malays remained in traditional villages (Omar et al., 2010). The different cultures and rituals from the Chinese and Indians and the English influence over Malaya led to different influences on sports (Omar et al., 2010). The Chinese were involved in basketball, the Indians were involved in football, and the Malays in "sepak raga" (a game played by kicking and controlling a rattan ball between a certain number of players without letting it touch the ground) (Omar et al., 2010). Ever since then, the people of Malaysia have made great strides in establishing themselves as a nation of sports.

After Malaysia gained independence in 1957, the then prime minister and president of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM), Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj created the Merdeka Tournament, a football (soccer) tournament to commemorate Independence Day (Football Association of Malaysia [FAM], 2016). Malaysia was one of the leading countries in football in Asia as the Malaysian football team used to be superior to countries, such as South

Korea and Japan, which was evident in the Merdeka Tournament (Othman, 2007). The Merdeka Tournament was such a success for Malaysia because Malaysia won the tournament three years in a row, in 1958, 1959, and were co-champions with South Korea in 1960, and because the Merdeka Tournament inspired other similar tournaments across Asia such as the Jakarta Anniversary tournament, the King's Cup in Thailand, and President's Cup in South Korea (FAM, 2016). The Malaysian Football national team competed in the 1972 Munich Olympics and qualified for the 1980 Moscow Olympics but did not compete as the Malaysian government boycotted the Moscow Olympics for political reasons (Othman, 2007).

In addition to football, Malaysia dominated the badminton scene in the past. Malaysian shuttlers Wong Peng Soon and Eddy Choong proved their dominance at the All-England Badminton Championships from 1950 to 1957, with Tan Aik Huang winning the tournament in 1966 (Othman, 2007). The Malaysian badminton national team has won the Triannual Thomas Cup, regarded as the biggest badminton tournament in the world, five times (1949, 1952, 1955, 1967, and 1992), and was runner up nine times (Thomas Cup, 2019). Datuk Lee Chong Wei dominated the badminton world throughout his career, achieving 69 career titles and 719 wins (which includes three silver Olympic medals), and becoming world number one in 2006 (Lee Chong Wei, World's Legendary Badminton Player from Malaysia, 2020). Another prominent Malaysian athlete, Datuk Nicol David, was the world number one in squash consecutively for 87 months starting in August 2006 (Nicol David Success Story, 2021). She also won the World Open seven times and was voted by other athletes as the World Games Greatest Athlete of All Time (Zainal, 2021).

Despite these achievements, Malaysia's performance and ranking in some sports are falling behind other countries as competition is getting better. Malaysia's FIFA ranking dropped

to its lowest in April and May of 2016, ranking 174th in the world (Singh, 2017). The Malaysian football team improved throughout 2016, but dropped again to 174 in 2017 (Singh, 2017). According to Khairy Jamaluddin, the former Malaysian Youth and Sports Minister, Malaysia used to win gold medals in athletics, swimming, badminton and sepak takraw in the SEA Games but Malaysia is now struggling to even win medals in these events (Singh A., 2014). In the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, Malaysia concluded the event with only six gold medals, seven silver medals, and six bronze medals, which was the worst result Malaysia has had since the Victoria 1994 Commonwealth Games (Dhaliwal, 2018). In addition, for the first time in the history of the Commonwealth Games, Malaysia finished behind their arch-rival, Singapore, who finished with eight gold medals, five silver medals, and four bronze medals (Husain, 2014).

Malaysia failed to achieve their target of 70 gold medals at the 2019 Manila SEA Games, winning only 56 gold medals, where only 3 out of 15 team sports won gold medals (Arasu, 2019). Twenty-six sports were targeted to win at least 1 gold in their sport, but only 18 sports contributed gold (Disastrous Outing for Malaysia in 2019 SEA Games, 2019). Overall, Malaysia finished fifth on the medal tally against other South-East Asian countries, despite targeting a top four finish, turning out to be Malaysia's worst performances in the SEA Games outside of Kuala Lumpur (Disastrous Outing for Malaysia in 2019 SEA Games, 2019). Malaysia's best performance in the SEA Games outside of Malaysia was in the 2007 Korat SEA Games, obtaining 68 gold medals (Disastrous Outing for Malaysia in 2019 SEA Games, 2019).

In response to these poor performances, the Malaysian government has taken some proactive steps to combat the declining quality and performance of Malaysian sports. To improve the nation's sport competitiveness on a global scale, the government established a four-pronged strategy (Rahman, 2020). The first strategy focuses on increasing government support of athletes

by developing an athlete center specializing in improving education and career pathways, and increasing support of athlete welfare (Rahman, 2020). In addition, the government is working on increasing funding for athletes by creating a special employment scheme in Government Linked Companies for athletes and increasing support of former athletes by establishing The National Athletes Welfare Foundation as well as corporate support from companies such as FWD Takaful Malaysia and Malaysian Airlines (Rahman, 2020). Furthermore, the first prong strategy also focuses on recognizing and developing new areas in sports, such as e-sports, as e-sports has been a growing industry in Malaysia over the recent years (Rahman, 2020).

To increase inclusivity, the government launched “Projek Tambahan Emas” to help para-athletes in Malaysia focusing on increasing initiatives involving specific target groups as well as women in sports (Rahman, 2020). Lastly, the Sports and Youth Ministry will focus on improving good governance and best practices within the ministry (Rahman, 2020). The government will also increase its efforts to reduce corruption in Malaysia by developing a Corruption Risk Management Plan that will be updated and refined continuously (Rahman, 2020). The government has also launched community sports-related programs such as “Rakan Muda”, community sports centers, “Cari Champion Programme”, National Women’s Games / National Sports and Fitness Convention, and Community Sports League with the main objective of developing Malaysian youth (Othman, 2007). The “One Student One Sport” policy was also launched by the government in 2011 with goals to nurture human capital through participation in sports year-round, cultivate a culture of sports that will lead the students to become a member of society that is active, possess a balanced and healthy lifestyle, forms good values and self-discipline, and create a pathway toward sporting excellence (Elumalai & Saryono, 2015). This policy is also meant to provide access to students to obtain benefits from sports involvement and

provide a platform for students that possess talent and potential to improve to a higher level (Elumalai & Saryono, 2015).

Although the government is working to improve the quality of sports in Malaysia, the development of sports, and the country's global competitiveness, scant scholarly work has been done to address the issues faced by Malaysian athletes, arguably the most important stakeholder group when it comes to improving the quality of sport in Malaysia. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of the Malaysian government's sport development efforts through the lens of the national athletes and provide recommendations that could lead to better sports development and improved quality of sports in Malaysia.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Main Issues in Malaysian Sports

This research focuses on the national athletes' perspective of government support on sports development efforts. Despite meager scholarly work on the national athletes' perspective, there are other studies on sports development. The literature review consists of the main issues and additional issues of sports in Malaysia, sports policy implemented in Malaysia, recommendations to improve the quality of sports in Malaysia, government funding of various countries for the development of sports and elite athletes and its importance, and the Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success or SPLISS Model. To further understand the sports development efforts in Malaysia, this study will compare the results with the nine pillars of the SPLISS Model, the main issues of sports in Malaysia, and the recommendations provided to improve sports in Malaysia.

In a study conducted by Mohamed Fiah, Mazlan, and Osman (2014), the poor quality of sports in Malaysia is due to five main reasons. These are lack of management skills, incompetency of sports administrators, lack of financial aids, corruption, and involvement of politicians in sports. The majority of the respondents in the study stated that good management skills are required for the quality of Malaysian sports to improve (Fiah et al., 2014). Some of the sport administrators lack management skills which result in poor management of the sport itself, and although a number of sport administrators possess the required qualifications and background, they lack experience and knowledge of the respective sport, which hinders improvement (Fiah et al., 2014). Due to poor management, a number of sports organizations require assistance from multiple sources, including the government (Fiah et al., 2014).

Additionally, the qualifications of the sports administrators may be lacking because the hiring process in Malaysian sports organizations is often associated with nepotism (Fiah et al., 2014).

The poor quality of sports and the lack of success and achievement negatively impact financial support in Malaysia as sport organizations face challenges in acquiring sponsors and ticket revenue (Fiah et al., 2014). This results in the need to survive on government aid (Fiah et al., 2014). In order to obtain government aid, the government imposes certain rules and regulations for the sport organizations to follow, which become a controlling mechanism, disallowing the sport organizations to function without a certain degree of freedom (Fiah et al., 2014).

Additionally, the sports industry in Malaysia is affected by corruption which impedes sports improvement (Fiah et al., 2014). Sport administrators were accused of or found guilty of bribery, and athletes, especially in football, were found guilty of match fixing (Fiah et al., 2014). The Malaysian Football National Team faced scrutiny from FIFA due to match-fixing scandals and two national players were found guilty of bribery (Hashim, 2012). Although the football association as well as the government have taken measures to reduce corruption and punish those responsible, the issue is still active in the industry (Fiah et al., 2014).

Problematic involvement of politicians in sports is another issue in Malaysia (Fiah et al., 2014). Malaysia has a unique situation where active politicians are also managing sports organizations and it has been known that these politicians are involved in sports to promote themselves to a higher position in politics and government. This leads to poor leadership and decrease in effectiveness (Fiah et al., 2014). Although some of these politicians are knowledgeable, experienced, and capable, using sports to promote themselves instead of focusing on promoting and improving sports affects the effectiveness of good governance due to

an overload of responsibility (Fiah et al., 2014). At one stage, former Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi ordered all ministers and deputy ministers to relinquish any positions they had in the sports organization but unfortunately, some ignored the order (Fiah et al., 2014).

The scarcity of availability and accessibility of venues and facilities are other added issues that exist in Malaysia, especially in towns and rural areas (Ghanad et al., 2015). The local governments are lacking facility and equipment for the public to utilize, such as jogging tracks, biking tracks, and physical exercise equipment and facilities for the public as well as competitive athletes to use such as badminton courts, squash courts, sepak takraw courts, basketball courts, and martial art halls (Ghanad et al., 2015). In addition, most local governments do not own well-maintained swimming pools for people of all ages to engage in swimming activities (Ghanad et al., 2015). Quality of life and happiness of Malaysian society depends on high income and good jobs as well as on sports recreational outlets but there are not enough sports outlets for kids and youth in localities to play and engage (Ghanad et al., 2015).

Government Sports Policy in Malaysia

The Sports Development Act of 1997 was passed by the Malaysian Parliament on September 25th, 1997, with the objective of promoting and facilitating the development, administration, and registration of sports in Malaysia (Sports Development Act, 1997). Along with the Act, the Sports Commissioner's Office and the Sports Advisory Panel were established to achieve the objectives (Sports Development Act, 1997). Since 1997, the Act was amended in 2018 (Sports Development Act, 1997). For the purposes of this Act, 39 activities are regarded as sports (Sports Development Act, 1997). Refer to Table 1 in Appendix for a full description of the Act's aim and objectives.

The Malaysian government introduced the 2009 National Sports Policy with the main goal of creating a sports culture amongst Malaysians which comprises participation in sports and physical activity through Sports for All, High Performance Sports and Sports as an Industry (Koon & Anuar, 2016). It indicates the objectives, strategies, roles, and responsibilities of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, sport councils, institutions of higher learning and national sport organizations in order to achieve the objectives and fulfill the policy's main goal (Koon & Anuar, 2016). Refer to Table 2 in Appendix for the objectives of the 2009 National Sports Policy.

In addition, the One Student One Sport Policy was developed in 2011 in an effort to “produce and develop well balanced students in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual” (Elumalai & Saryono, 2015, p. 4). This policy was created to, among other things, increase access and opportunity to all students in Malaysia, especially the less privileged, disabled, and less active students allowing them to build on their talents and step up towards a higher level of sports (Elumalai & Saryono, 2015). The government provided an outline for schools to use in order to implement this policy such as ensuring year-round sports, collaborating with relevant agencies, and how to maximize usage of facilities, equipment, and expertise in school (Elumalai & Saryono, 2015). The One Student One Sport Policy was also created to improve health amongst Malaysians by reducing health issues through sports and increase development of sports and quality of sports in Malaysia (Elumala & Saryono, 2015). The objectives of this policy are to increase physical fitness, develop character, self-esteem discipline and moral values, foster racial unity, develop a sports culture amongst students, to fulfill school children's natural affinity for physical activities, to provide balance between academic and physical needs, and to provide a platform towards sports excellence (Elumalai & Saryono, 2015).

Recommendations to Improve Quality of Sports in Malaysia

The quality of Malaysian football has been deteriorating since the 1980s and has been a topic of discussion in the Malaysian community and sports industry (Hashim, 2012). Malaysia reached its peak in football between the 1960s and 1980s, being considered one of the strongest national teams in Asia (Hashim, 2012). Certain issues have been identified to be the root cause of the deterioration in Malaysian football such as corruption, strict control of the state football associations, and a poor business model (Hashim, 2012). In order to combat these issues as well as work on improving the quality of Malaysian football, Hashim (2012) provided some recommendations that could be adapted by the government as well as the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM). To improve the quality of football (and other sports) in Malaysia, the government of Malaysia should encourage private capital investments into the domestic leagues as well as the national teams (Hashim, 2012). Although private capital investments are allowed, the investments are only sponsorships on advertisements which do not contribute to improving the quality of football in domestic leagues (Hashim, 2012). Japan and South Korea are examples where private capital investments are proven to be successful in producing better quality players and coaches, win international tournaments, and improve their rankings and ratings on the football per capita index (Hashim, 2012).

The FAM should also be disallowed from having unqualified presidents leading the organization as there was an abuse of power for the presidential position in FAM (Hashim, 2012). Additionally, Malaysia should create a short- and long-term plan to attract the best players, managers, coaches, and administrators into the Malaysian football scene, just like the United States (US) did with the Major League Soccer (MLS) and the Netherlands with Eredivisie (the Netherlands football league) (Hashim, 2012). The US, through the MLS, built football

infrastructures and developed youth academies for each team in the MLS through public and private investments, while the Netherlands created a successful business plan that focused on reinvesting profits and provided it to the clubs to attract high quality players and coaches (Hashim, 2012). Creating a free managerial statute encouraging investments from private and public investments would allow Malaysia to create a franchise environment of club ownership instead of government-inclination (Hashim, 2012). There needs to be less regulations and control by the government and an increase in the business and marketing environment in order for the quality of Malaysian football to improve (Hashim, 2012). Furthermore, Malaysia should revivify the infrastructure in order to create a platform, such as young talent programs, to allow young talents to improve starting in the early stages of school and through university and college (Hashim, 2012). An example of this is a five-year development program beginning with pre-teen players which cultivates, nurtures, and develops local talents, and exposes them with foreign players so they can improve (Hashim, 2012).

Government Funding for the Development of Sports and Elite Athletes

As new developments in the various sectors of the sport industry are emerging, developing athletes can be an expensive process, as can be seen with several countries (Colombe, 2005). Although there are various issues that have been identified pertaining to athlete funding, the Canadian government is increasing their efforts to increase funding for the development of elite athletes (Colombe, 2005). In 2000, former Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, Dennis Coderre announced an increase of 60 percent in funding for Canada's amateur athletes (Colombe, 2005). Even after the increase, there was still a demand for additional funding to support athlete development as Canada performed poorly in the 2000 Sydney Olympics after

only winning 14 medals compared to the 22 medals the nation won at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics (Colombe, 2005).

Out of the 14 medals, 5 medals came from sports that were not contested at the 1996 Olympic Games (Colombe, 2005). Federal Funds that were available to Sport Canada in 2002 was approximately \$75 million, which was much lower compared to other nations such as Australia, Germany, and the UK (Colombe, 2005). The Australian government invested almost 50% more in their sports compared to Canada, Germany invested approximately \$300 million on high performance sport alone, and the UK invested over \$750 million in their sports over the same period (Colombe, 2005). In 2003, the Canadian government contributed an additional \$25 million towards high performance sport over a five-year span (Colombe, 2005). In addition, the government included \$45 million to assist with sport participation over a five-year span (Colombe, 2005). By 2004, the overall sum that was injected into sport development in Canada was \$120 million (Colombe, 2005).

Sports development efforts in Kuwait dates back to 1952 when Kuwait established the Kuwaiti Sport Union, or also known as Etihad el Riadi as the first public authority with the main goal to supervise both sport and youth sport championships (Aldousari, 2004). To improve the sporting scene in Kuwait, foreign trainers were hired to train Kuwaiti athletes, and the youth were encouraged to compete in international tournaments (Aldousari, 2004). In 1961, sport activities were included in school curricula, and the government invested money, among other factors, into youth centers, sport teams, and national clubs (Aldousari, 2004). The Kuwaiti government has focused on (1) providing subsidies to maintain sport institutions, reward trainers, and give out prizes, (2) providing grants for sport missions and funds for participation in

international sport events, (3) establishing sport institutions, and (4) encouraging and increasing women participation in sports and competitions (Aldousari, 2004).

Importance of Government Funding on Sports Quality and Development

According to De Bosscher et al. (2006), there are nine pillars that influence elite sporting success, which are: financial support, integrated approach to policy development, sport participation, talent identification and development system, athletic and post career support, training facilities, coaching provision and coach development, national and international competitions, and scientific research and sports medicine support. A study has shown that when all above factors have been taken into consideration, national governing bodies that pursue organizational effectiveness have a tendency to better improve their sport systems and performance (Goranova & Byers, 2015). Although the nine pillars do not guarantee success, effective management and implementation of initiatives are needed to sustain it (Goranova & Byers, 2015).

To elaborate on financial support, monetary funding could be a factor to develop a systematic approach in supporting elite athletes (Goranova & Byers, 2015). For example, funding on various Olympic sports by Sport England and UK Sport has proven to have an impact on successful athletes' performance (Goranova & Byers, 2015). A different study found that participation rate in sport increases when there are more opportunities present (higher funding, better facilities, and accessibility) (Goranova & Byers, 2015). This means that a higher participation rate will lead to an increased chance of better-quality athletes (Goranova & Byers, 2015).

Financial support and an integrated approach to policy development are vital factors for the development of sport and athletic careers within a respective sport. The first pillar, which is the financial and human resources, are the inputs of sport policy (Bosscher et al., 2006). Despite having the first pillar, it does not guarantee success although it increases the chances of success tremendously (Bosscher et al., 2006). The throughput, which is also known as the processes behind the policy, refers to the efficiency of sport policies (Bosscher et al., 2006). A strong and reliable organizational structure, which is reflected in the second pillar, is needed to manage the inputs to achieve the output (Bosscher et al., 2006). In simpler terms, pillar one is an indicator of the input while pillars two to nine are indicators of the throughput, with the goal of achieving the output (Bosscher et al., 2006). The SPLISS model suggests that a holistic approach to elite sport is needed in the development of athletes with the capabilities to win at a high level (Bosscher et al., 2006). To increase the chances of success, nations need to find the right combination of all pillars instead of investing in a certain number of pillars (Bosscher et al., 2006).

The main issues in Malaysian sports as well as the issues faced in Malaysian football provides an understanding of what the Malaysian national athletes face in their athletic journey. In addition, the Sports Development Act of 1997 and the 2009 National Sports Policy are what the government is currently implementing for the general population while the One Student One Sport policy is what is implemented in school. These are the policies that some of the national athletes grew up with. These factors led to the research questions of this study, to dig deeper into the perspectives of the national athletes on these issues and policies. Also, looking into three different countries with three different levels of success and money in the sports world provides an insight into the differences between them and compare it to Malaysia in hopes this

information can be used to improve sports development and quality of sports in Malaysia. The research questions that have been established are:

RQ1: How do Malaysian national athletes perceive the resources and opportunities provided by the Malaysian government to support their athletic career?

RQ2: What can the Malaysian government do in order to improve the quality of sports and sports development in Malaysia?

To answer these questions, interviews were conducted on a sample of the Malaysian national athletes from different sports to gain their perspective on whether the government is doing all they can to improve the development and quality of sports in Malaysia and to provide their recommendations on ways to improve the development and quality of sports in Malaysia.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

To uncover the athletes' perspective of the government support of their athletic career as well as sports development and sports quality in Malaysia, this study utilized semi-structured interviews with Malaysian national athletes from various sports. This study is a qualitative study therefore the interview approach was used to collect data from the Malaysian national athletes. According to Busetto et al. (2020), qualitative research is “the study of the nature of phenomena.” In other words, it is a research method that is used to comprehend people's experience and beliefs (Bhandari, 2022). It does not involve numerical data; therefore, it is the opposite of quantitative study (Bhandari, 2022). Qualitative research was chosen because the research questions cannot be answered through quantitative methods. To discover patterns and understand them, qualitative research was needed (Busetto et al., 2020). Interviews are an effective method for qualitative research as it assists the researcher to obtain in-depth information and data from the subjects and allows for a deeper understanding of the subjects' opinions and perspectives of the research topic (Virginia Tech University Library, 2018). In addition to meaningful insights, qualitative research allows for flexibility and generation of new ideas (Bhandari, 2022). During the data collection and analysis process, generation of new ideas might occur due to the nature of open-ended questions in the interview process therefore, the data collection and analysis process may be adapted (Bhandari, 2022). The interviews were conducted online through Zoom as the participants were mainly in Malaysia while the researcher was in the United States of America. The interviews were voice-orientated, therefore cameras were switched off, recorded, and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of data.

Research design, according to Trochim (2006) is a strategy that combines the different elements of a study which leads to the findings of the research questions. Essentially, it is the

blueprint of the study (Trochim, 2006). Research design was instrumental for this study as it ensured that the research questions were answered logically and unambiguously using the evidence obtained (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). This provided an accurate finding, representation of data, and interpretation in the study. For this study, the research design that was implemented was cross-sectional which involves collecting data at a specific point in time without any further data collection in the future (Cherry, 2019). Cross-sectional research design is categorized under descriptive research, which is research that describes a population, situation, or phenomenon, and is a form of observational study, therefore intervention is non-existent (Cherry, 2019). It provides a snapshot of current characteristics or situation of a particular group (Cherry, 2019). This research design allowed for a large sum of information of different variables to be obtained quickly and cheaply (Cherry, 2019). In addition, cross-sectional studies do not determine cause and effect, therefore often, cross-sectional studies become a base to prompt further study into a specific topic (Cherry, 2019).

Participants

The interviews were conducted with a total of 11 current and former Malaysian national athletes from seven different sports. To ensure reliability of the study, any ex-Malaysian national athletes that were let go or stepped down before 2010 were not interviewed. The only requirements were that they were national athletes at the start of 2010 (between 2010 and the present) or are current national athletes, and that they are over the age of 18. The year 2010 was chosen as the base to ensure a similar approach in terms of government support for each national athlete. A lower base would allow for a disparity as the government could have had different policies and or support for the national athletes in the past compared to current policies and supports.

The participants were chosen using convenience and snowball sampling due to the logistical reason as stated earlier, and a limited amount of time to conduct interviews and collect data. Some of the participants were athletes that the researcher knew personally. The participants were contacted through Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and email, and after interviewing some national athletes, the study was then conveyed to other national athletes that had a pre-existing relationship with the national athletes that were interviewed, creating a snowball. The pre-existing relationship of the researcher as well as the snowball sampling starting with national athletes ensured the participants were national athletes, but to further ensure validity, Google searches were conducted on the national athletes and their previous achievements in competitions representing Malaysia.

The interviews were a semi-structured virtual phone interview over Zoom, consisting of national athletes of different ages and gender to avoid bias, as this study focused on the support of the national athletes by the government, as a whole, not based on age or gender. A semi-structured interview is a combination of structured and unstructured interview questions, as the interviewer asked questions that were predetermined, but also asked unplanned questions if needed to further obtain detail and or further clarification (Pollock, 2020).

Instruments

The questions for the interview were created based on a framework of nine pillars that was used in a paper by Bosscher et al. (2006). The nine pillars or nine policy areas were identified as crucial factors that lead to international sporting success (Bosscher et al., 2006). The nine pillars are financial support, integrated approach to policy development, sport participation, talent identification and development system, athletic and post career support, training facilities, coaching provision and coach development, national and international competitions, and

scientific research and sports medicine support. Questions that were based on this framework allowed this study to obtain findings and data that led to a better understanding of where the Malaysian government needs to maintain or improve in order to improve the quality of sports and sports development in Malaysia. Refer to Appendix A for a list of the interview questions.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study to analyze the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis method is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the qualitative data. It is often used in interview research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As thematic analysis is not bonded with any pre-existing theoretical framework, it can be used within various theoretical frameworks, and can be useful for different things within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be an essentialist method, constructionist method, or a contextualist method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study falls under the essentialist method, which reports experiences, meanings, and reality of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as the study was collecting data based on the experiences of the Malaysian national athletes in relation to the support of the government. Patterns do not have to be based on quantifiable measures, but rather something important in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As strict rules will not work, flexibility must be retained, therefore, determination of what a theme is, relies on the judgment of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The most common approach in conducting thematic analysis consists of six steps. The first step was familiarization which involved transcribing audio, reading through it and familiarizing, and taking necessary notes (Caulfield, 2020). The second step was coding which means highlighting phrases or sentences of the data and coming up with codes that describe their content (Caulfield, 2020). After coding the data, the codes were placed into groups which

allowed for an overview of the recurring main points and common meanings (Caulfield, 2020). The third step was generating themes, which means taking the codes that were created and identifying patterns among them and coming up with themes (Caulfield, 2020). For some codes that were vague and not relevant enough, they were removed (Caulfield, 2020). Step four was to review the themes by returning to the data set and compare the themes with it to identify any factors that the researcher may have missed, whether the themes were actually present in the data, and if there were anything that needs to be changed to ensure the themes worked better (Caulfield, 2020). This was to ensure that the themes were useful and accurate representations of the data (Caulfield, 2020). Defining and naming themes was step five and involved what each theme meant exactly and how it will help the researcher understand the data (Caulfield, 2020). The last step was writing up the analysis of the data (Caulfield, 2020). Some of the advantages of thematic analyses include flexibility, a ‘thick description’ of the data set, unanticipated insights, and production of qualitative analyses suitable in informing policy development (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

A total of 11 athletes from 7 different sports were interviewed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The athletes interviewed were a combination of male and female with the length of their national career spanning between 2 to 21 years. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality. Refer to Table 3 in Appendix for a full breakdown of participant demographics. The results were divided into two segments, answering the two research questions presented in the study. Six main themes were identified in response to the first research question. The themes were nothing, adequate competition opportunities, financial incentives with a subtheme of insufficient financial support, good access to the NSI, adequate physical resources, and high-quality coaching. In response to the second research question, two themes were identified which were lack of post career support and increased funding and exposure. One recommendation highlighted by the athletes was improved communication. Refer to Table 4 in Appendix for a list of themes, description, and number of occurrences. A summary of the full results is provided below.

RQ 1: How do Malaysian national athletes perceive the resources and opportunities provided by the Malaysian government to support their athletic career?

In the interview, various questions were asked in relation to the resources and opportunities provided to the athletes by the Malaysian government. The athletes were asked whether the government was doing anything to develop potential national athletes. which focused on what happens before the athletes were called up into the national team. Developing potential national athletes focuses on any resources provided to non-national athletes to allow them to improve and achieve the level that is needed to be in the national team as well as prepare the athletes to be called into the national team. The theme that presented itself was nothing.

Nothing

The majority of the athletes revealed that the government is doing nothing to develop potential national athletes. David stated his perspective:

I don't think they are doing much, I think they can be doing a lot better. I don't think they care. I really don't know how to frame this for you. From where I stand and how I view things, I don't see them doing anything to outsource younger talents. They sit in a chair and wait for something to come up.

Bill mentioned "No, they were not doing anything, nothing that I remember."

Adequate Competition Opportunities

When asked about tournament opportunities, the theme that was identified was adequate competition opportunities. The athletes stated that the government provided tournament opportunities for them to showcase their talent and abilities on the international level. According to Caitlin:

National players are basically sent to international tournaments to see where we stand against foreign countries. From there, they will judge us to see if we are good enough based on our achievement and performance to compete in the major games like SEA Games or Asian Games, or many other martial art games. The big ones. I was lucky enough to get to compete in the SEA Games and Asian Games.

Mia said, "as a national athlete, all the national athletes benefit in terms of tournaments is really just events like Asian Games and SEA Games."

This suggests that the government is providing tournament opportunities for the national athletes to compete and improve. Adequate competition opportunities do not reflect opportunities to develop potential national athletes as adequate competition opportunities are a benefit of being in the national team. Only national team athletes receive international competition opportunities from the government. For non-national athletes, some competition might not be accessible to them or in some cases, are accessible but the expenses will be out of their own pocket. Competitions that are not accessible to non-national athletes are the SEA Games, Commonwealth Games, and Asian Games.

Financial Incentives

Another question that was asked to the athletes was whether they receive any form of financial support and whether they felt like it was enough. The theme that came up was financial incentives, stating that they were given monthly allowances and additional incentives. Laura provided an insight on monthly allowances:

We get monthly allowances on top of the rest of the assistance and support that we get. It (the monthly allowance) differs from year to year. When I first entered the program, we got little support. I only got a high amount of allowance since I won the Asian Games medal.

Tracy said, “I received monthly allowances, and incentives were given but I never experienced receiving incentives because I have never won any international tournaments but incentives are only for big events like the SEA Games, Asian Games, Olympics, and World Championships.”

While the government does provide financial incentives, a subtheme that was identified was insufficient financial support as the majority of the athletes stated that the financial support provided was not enough. David had this to say:

I struggled a lot actually, I am still struggling now to get financial support, and the NSC gives terrible financial support. Last year, they refused to support me through the whole year, only from January until June. I have performed now at the end of the season and I get a call from the NSC, based on the proposal I sent last December, they can't fund me fully for what I want, but at the same time, they enlisted me in a program they call the AsiaCom program, which is the Asian Games and Commonwealth program, and these athletes in the program are meant to be able to be given the privilege for more funding. It's getting to a point where it is becoming worse and more unacceptable because everywhere I go as an athlete, I represent them. I carry the Malaysian flag. I carried their name so I deserve the support from them, the financial support. Sports is an investment and the NSC fails to understand that. And that is becoming a big problem right now, and despite all that, I also had my allowances cut recently stepping into this year from all the budget cuts.

Keith said:

I received monthly allowances from the NSC. I did get some incentive for winning a tournament and at the SEA Games but it's really not much. The figure is really small, probably a few hundred, like RM300 to RM500. I think only the bigger tournaments players get incentives. I don't think it (financial support) was sufficient because I felt like my parents were paying a lot more for me to travel, taking me to the court etc.

This suggests that although the NSC is providing financial support, it is insufficient for the athletes to support their athletic career. Although receiving incentives might help, not all athletes have won a big enough tournament to receive incentives to help support their career.

Good Access to the NSI

The athletes were asked whether they were provided with facilities and equipment to improve on their athletic abilities and how they felt of the quality and accessibility of the facilities and equipment that were provided. High praises were given from a large number of athletes toward the National Sports Institute (NSI) as they had good access to the NSI. In addition, adequate physical resources was a theme that was identified from the responses of the athletes. Keith said:

We had nutritionists taking care of what we eat, psychologists that we met once a week, gym trainers that looked after us and we had access to the jungle gym. When you're injured, you have access to the rehab center i.e., doctors, physiotherapists. We got everything in the NSI. Sometimes we could use the ice bath for recovery, and then if you are in rehab, we could use the swimming pool to do recovery stuff. I think the rehab staff were really helpful and they always checked on me.

Alexis, speaking on the NSI said:

In terms of sports science, we got everything. Biomechanics, motion capture, and testing related sport science upon request were given. I feel very blessed. I realized after retiring that the cost of having a gym instructor, gym membership and such is expensive.

This shows that the government is providing good medical and sports science support to the athletes.

Adequate Physical Resources

In regard to training facilities and equipment, Alexis expressed:

In terms of high performance (the high-performance team), we received a treatment where our equipment was handled by professionals to maintain it and some equipment like bullets and such were being selected specifically for the weapon and catered to your skills. They were custom made for us to improve our performance. We had a shooting range that catered only for the high-performance national team, which was not open to the public, which was quite special and in terms of equipment were catered for a specific athlete. Rifles (weapons) were provided to each individual, and apparel and bullets were also catered for the individual.

Laura said:

I had access to everything in the NSC and the NSI. In terms of equipment, everything is there at the stadium. At the facilities, there are different tools to assist the athletes and so on. It depends on the athletes and the coach, what kind of system and programs they are into. Through my experience in Germany and South Africa, they don't even have the facilities that we have in Bukit Jalil (location of the NSC and the NSI) but they have much better athletes, world class athletes.

In terms of the quality and accessibility of these facilities and equipment, Alexis indicated "top notch quality and accessibility", Greg said "the quality and accessibility was good", and Tracy said, "the facilities are great, world class facilities."

This shows that the facilities and accessibility provided to the athletes are meeting their needs.

High Quality Coaching

The athletes were also asked about the qualifications and abilities of the coaches the athletes worked with under the national team. The theme that came up was high quality coaching. Laura said:

I am fortunate and blessed that I met a lot of world class coaches. Throughout my career I was guided by world class coaches as well. My second coach was in the national development program (now a professor), then a German coach, he is currently the head coach of the German national team. My third coach is a Bulgarian coach who is in Vietnam, two of his athletes competed in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, and my last coach is from South Africa. He is probably one of the best coaches in the world, because he has numerous athletes that competed at the international level, Olympic Games and the World Championship.

Tracy had this to say about her coach “looking at his CV, it’s really good because he had Olympians that he trained and to be honest, he was a really good coach.” This suggests that the NSC has provided good quality coaches for the national athletes.

RQ 2: What can the Malaysian government do in order to improve the quality of sports and sports development in Malaysia?

To answer RQ2, a series of questions were asked to the athletes asking for their thoughts and recommendations on what they believe needs to be done or changed in order to improve the quality of sports and sports development in Malaysia. Two themes were identified and one recommendation was highlighted based on the discussions with the athletes in the study. The

recommendation was not deemed a theme due to the low number of occurrences within the athletes.

Lack of Post Career Support

The first theme that presented itself was lack of post career support by the government. Seven out of eleven of the athletes stated that to their knowledge, there was no post career support given to them or there will not be any post career support should they retire from the national team. David said, “I have seen athletes who have retired and just, left alone, no one cares, that’s the truth, and no one does anything about it.”

Increased Funding and Exposure

The second theme that presented itself was increased funding and exposure. By exposure, the athletes were referring to international exposure for competition as well as training. To be able to have an increase in international exposure, an increase in funding will be needed. Bree said, “I would say that I recommend the government gives us more financial support and just more opportunities in general through both the NSC and the association.”

Bill said:

One, more funding but I know they are tied on their end. Funding is more like taking golfers to international tournaments for exposure, that kind of stuff. I would say maybe, if they lack funding, don’t give them allowances, just give them more opportunities to compete at a higher level, I feel like that is more important.

Tracy said “Spend the money. I think they have the money to spend in the sports industry but we don’t get that. If you want us to get better, then bring us out. Lastly, Keith said “To

improve sports development, probably send players overseas, get more training, and get better coaches.”

The recommendation highlighted from the study was improved communication between the NSOs and the NSC. When asked to elaborate on improved communication, Alexis said:

From my standpoint, I think that the association needs to understand the role of the NSC, then we can have better governance, administrator, and management. From my standpoint, because they don't understand these roles, they let the NSC do it. Everything is handed to the NSC. So, when they hand everything to the government, when there is a change in the ministry, policies, and such, it will affect the athletes that train and represent our NSO. This is a big issue. There is a miscommunication and understanding in between what roles the NSC and the NSO play. The NSC should do this and the NSO should do this.

Greg said:

If you have heard recently, there were a lot of athletes that were dropped from the national program. A lot of people are blaming the NSC for this, but on the inside story, I heard that the head of the NSC has been fighting to get financial support to back these athletes up and things like that. But this is not what the athletes know and it's not what is being reported in the news. So, there's a lot of confusion there and conflicting reports and things like that because on the athletes' side, everyone is blaming their association and also the NSC. There needs to be more open communication.

The poor communication between the NSOs and the NSC are having a pernicious effect on the athletes. Whether it be the lack of understanding of the role each party has or whether the

athletes are being kept in the dark, improved communication is needed to ensure that the athletes are treated appropriately and given the best environment to thrive in.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the Malaysian government's sport development efforts through the lens of the national athletes and provide recommendations that could lead to better sports development and improved quality of sports in Malaysia. Through the interviews, themes were identified based on the responses provided by the athletes and compared to the SPLISS model in order to identify which areas are excelling and which areas need to be improved upon. In addition, the themes were also compared to a previous study that identified main issues in Malaysian sports to further identify whether different issues exist from their perspective. As stated earlier, the nine pillars of the SPLISS model are financial support, integrated approach to policy development, sport participation, talent identification and development system, athletic and post career support, training facilities, coaching provision and coach development, national and international competitions, and scientific research and sports medicine support (Bosscher et al., 2006).

One of the themes identified from the responses was insufficient financial support. Despite receiving monthly allowances and the opportunity to receive incentives, the athletes feel that the funding is insufficient, with some referring to logistic funding while others referred to training funding. Financial support is one of the pillars that contribute to the success of a sport, an athlete, and the development of the sport itself. This indicates that Malaysia is falling short in this area and must increase its funding in order to increase the chances of success. Even though the interview questions did not touch on integrated sport policies in depth (sport policies were presented in the literature review), as stated in the literature review, a strong and reliable organizational structure is reflected in the second pillar (Bosscher et al., 2006). The question on the governance, administrators, and management within the NSC and their respective NSOs did

not result in a theme but resulted in a recommendation when discussed with the athletes. The recommendation is a result of a weak and unreliable organizational structure. The athletes expressed that there are communication issues between the NSC and the NSOs that affect the national athletes such as miscommunication between the roles they play, and athletes kept in the dark. The athletes' progress is often hindered by the miscommunication between the NSC and the NSOs. This could affect the nation's progress in sports and sports development in the long run.

The line of questioning that was created did not explore much of sport participation. Despite sport participation coming up in the responses from the athletes, the frequency of the response was low, therefore it was not considered a theme. When asked about talent identification and development systems, which is the fourth pillar, the main theme was that the government is doing nothing to identify potential talent and do not have development systems to develop these potential athletes. This is troubling as some athletes might not be able to live up to their full potential. This could also affect the growth of a sport because if nothing is being done, many potential athletes do not get the chance to grow and improve and furthermore, potential athletes might remove themselves from the sport if no future or potential growth could occur.

An interesting revelation from the interview was the theme "lack of post career support" when asked about post career support (pillar five). The majority of the athletes indicated that the government lacks post career support. The majority of the athletes expressed that there was no post career support in place for them after they retired or should they retire from the national team. On the other hand, the remaining minority of athletes mentioned that there is a post career support system which is YAKEB, which stands for Yayasan Kebajikan Atlet Kebangsaan or The National Athletic Welfare Foundation. It could be that the athletes are unaware of the existence

of YAKEB or YAKEB does not provide a good enough post career support to the athletes or YAKEB is doing a subpar effort in helping the athletes' post-career to be known by the majority of the athletes in this study. Regardless of which, YAKEB must become more conscious of their efforts to support the athletes, including increasing their awareness amongst the athletes. This indicates that the government must improve on this pillar in order to develop sports and improve the nation's quality of sports.

The sixth pillar is training facilities and when asked about training facilities, a theme that came up was adequate physical resources. Training facilities and equipment are crucial for the growth and improvement of the athletes and the quality of sports in Malaysia. The responses indicated that the athletes are satisfied with the physical resources as well as its quality and accessibility. The ability to access the facilities as often as possible allows the athletes to further improve. This indicates that the government is doing an outstanding job providing the athletes the training facilities and equipment, and the quality needed to improve and grow sports. In regard to the seventh pillar, which is coaching provision and coach development, only coaching provision was asked of the athletes. The theme that came up was high quality coaching. Coaches with the highest qualifications and abilities are provided to the athletes to help guide the athletes and improve their skills. This indicates another pillar that the Malaysian government is fulfilling which leads to a higher rate of success and growth of Malaysian sports.

National and international competitions are the eighth pillar and when asked about competitions, there are adequate competition opportunities but when asked on what could be improved, the theme that presented itself was increased funding and increased exposure. Athletes expressed that there is a lack of international exposure which includes international competitions and training. According to the athletes, international competitions are provided but are limited to

certain competitions or certain athletes. To improve, an increase in international competition for a higher number of athletes is needed. For that to become a reality, an increase in funding is needed. The government needs to work on providing ample opportunities for the athletes to compete internationally to gain exposure and experience. The last pillar in the SPLISS model is scientific research and sports medicine support. The National Sports Institute (NSI) is the statutory body under the government that is responsible for sports science and medical. The theme identified was good access to the NSI. The majority of the athletes indicated that they had full access to the NSI which included but not limited to gym access and trainer, medical requirements, nutritionists, psychologists, physiotherapists, and sports science-related data such as biomechanics. Having access to these resources is beneficial, especially constant full access as it allows athletes to recover faster, take better care of their body and mind, and allows further improvement through data analytics. Despite some athletes stating they received little to no support, the broad theme to come out of the study was that the athletes found they had sufficient support from the government.

The main issues identified in Malaysian sports in a previous study include lack of management skills, incompetency of sport administrators, lack of financial aids, corruption, and involvement of politicians in sports (Fiah et al., 2014). In Fiah et al. (2014) study, it was mentioned that good management skills are essential for Malaysian sports, but it was highlighted that some sports administrators do not possess good management skills, which leads to poor management of the sport, especially those who manage sport associations. This is also a form of incompetency of sport administrators. A recommendation provided in the study was better communication, specifically, better communication between the NSC and the NSOs. The miscommunication that often happens between the NSC and the NSOs is a form of lack of

management skills. As stated in the study, good management skills are required for sports to improve (Fiah et al., 2014)

Although lack of funding is an issue in the previous study and increased funding is a theme in this study, both of these are looking at it from different perspectives. This study is exploring the support of the government for sports while the previous study dictates that due to the lack of funding, the government imposes certain rules and regulations that become a controlling mechanism, hindering the sport organizations. Corruption, which was identified in the previous study, was not a theme identified in this study but the involvement of politicians in sports is a link that could be explored as it was mentioned in the study but was not mentioned enough to be a theme. The last main issue presented in the prior study was involvement of politicians in sports. While this was an issue in the prior study, no prominent theme emerged in this study related to the issue.

In a different study, Hashim (2012) provided certain recommendations to improve football and other sports in Malaysia. The first recommendation provided in the study was encouraging private capital investments into the domestic leagues as well as the national teams (Hashim, 2012). Although encouraging private capital investments was not a theme, there were responses from the athletes that seek privatization as a form of recommendation to the government to improve sports development and quality of sports in Malaysia. The second recommendation provided by Hashim (2012) was that sports organizations (or in the study, specifically referring to FAM) are disallowed from having unqualified presidents leading the organizations. Hashim's (2012) recommendation on disallowing unqualified presidents leading the organization was not found to be a theme in this study but was also mentioned by a few of the interviewed athletes. Lastly, Hashim suggested that the infrastructures should be revived in

order to create a platform to improve young talents in the early stages of school through to university and colleges (Hashim, 2012). Revivifying the infrastructure to create a platform to improve young talents, although not mentioned by the athletes, is supported by the lack of talent identification and development systems by the government. This is an area that needs to be developed in order to improve sports development.

The other themes that were identified from the responses of athletes are increased funding and increased exposure. Funding as mentioned earlier needs to be increased in order for sports to improve as there is a lack of funding. International exposure is another area that needs to be improved, according to the athletes. To improve in their sports, they need to compete against the best and learn from the best, therefore international exposure will be a crucial aspect. In order for this to be possible, it goes back to funding. Without funding, international exposure will be restricted, indicating that these factors are intertwined with each other.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study provide a different perspective on sports development and improvement in Malaysia for policymakers to understand and apply. Instead of launching initiatives and policies from their perspective, this allows policymakers to understand what the athletes need for them to improve and what they believe is needed to improve sports development and quality of sports in Malaysia. It is with great hope that the policymakers and others in the government would understand, apply, and improve on the recommendations presented by the athletes in this study. There are many pillars that the government is doing well in but if the recommendations presented were improved upon, hopefully the quality of sports and sports development in Malaysia could be improved greatly.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with most studies, the current study has some limitations. This study does not involve a sample of athletes from all the national sport organizations as different sports might receive more or less support from the government, but a few participants from a variety of sports were interviewed to ensure more accurate data. In addition, although this study is anonymous, the national athletes might have provided biased responses due to fear of consequences by their respective sport organizations and the National Sports Council of Malaysia. To reduce bias, the athletes were made anonymous and any data and quotes that were collected were not tied to their real name, only that it came from the seven different sports and a given pseudonym.

Further research will be needed to explore and further understand the perceived image of the government in the development of sports in Malaysia. Possible future research could consist of a larger scale study, involving a higher number of athletes from a higher number of sports. A quantitative, survey study will be appropriate to reach more athletes. This could provide a clearer and deeper understanding of government support for the national athletes. Furthermore, certain sports associations receive full support from the NSC while some sports work independently despite the former and the latter being national teams in their respective sports. Further studies could conduct research on the differences between the two to gain further insight on the different supports received from the government. In addition, future studies could seek to explore the relationship between government and associations, and funding. Also, it was found that the NSC and the NSI despite being statutory bodies under the government, were in fact separated. The interview questions, although not affected by the discovery, could be more specific in possible future research. Last but not least, future research could survey youth sport participants in

Malaysia to further assess the perception of sport development at that level (prior to national team status).

In summary, there are various areas of the SPLISS model that the Malaysian government is excelling in. Although there are areas that could be improved upon, this study has provided insights of one of the most important stakeholders in the industry, the national athletes. This study has also identified other main issues in Malaysian sports from the perspective of the national athletes, such as lack of post career support, poor communication between the NSOs and the NSC, and the lack of funding and exposure. This study provided a glimpse into what the national athletes generally receive from the government and what they believe is needed from the government to further improve sports development and quality of sports in Malaysia.

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APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 1: Sports Development Act of 1997 Objectives

Sports Development Act of 1997
To promote and develop its sports
To maintain good terms with and to be in good standing with the international governing and regulatory body of its sport
To ensure that its constitution and rules are observed and abided by all its members
To control and exercise jurisdiction over all activities in relation to its sport in Malaysia and by representatives of Malaysians abroad

Table 2: 2009 National Sports Policy Objectives

2009 National Sports Policy Objectives
Strengthen a culture of participation in sports among Malaysians
Enhance the knowledge and practice of sports in order to create a sports culture among Malaysians
Promote greater participation in sports activities at all levels in order to develop a disciplined and united society
Provide opportunities, incentives and careers to fulfill basic individual needs through sports
Provide sports facilities to meet the needs at all levels
Strengthen sports bodies and associations with professional governance practices
Develop sports as an industry
Achieve excellence at national and international levels in the true spirit of sportsmanship

Table 3: Demographic Table

Name	Sport	Length of National Career	National Team Status
Mia	Golf	8 years	Current
Sebastian	Golf	6 years	Former
Bill	Golf	10 years	Current
Keith	Squash	5 years	Former
Greg	Swimming	14 years	Former
Tracy	Swimming	6 years	Former
Caitlin	Taekwondo	10 years	Former
Alexis	Shooting	13 years	Former
Laura	Athletics	21 years	Former
David	Athletics	14 years	Current
Bree	Football	2 years	Current

* Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity and confidentiality of the athletes

Table 4: Qualitative Theme Table

Theme	Description of Theme	Frequency
Nothing	Not doing anything to develop potential national athletes	7/11
Adequate Competition Opportunities	Tournament opportunities in the SEA Games, Commonwealth Games, and Asian Games	11 / 11
Financial Incentives - Insufficient Financial Support	Monthly allowances were provided and the opportunity to receive additional incentives depending on competition performance - The ability to support oneself with the financial support given	9 / 11 - 11 / 11
Good Access to the NSI	Full access to resources provided by the NSI	8 / 11
Adequate Physical Resources	Provided high quality and	7 / 11

	accessible practice facilities and equipment	
High Quality Coaching	Coaches provided were of good quality and had high qualifications	9 / 11
Lack of Post Career Support	The post career support given to the athletes or will be given after retirement	7 / 11
Increased Funding and Exposure	Increase funding for sports and athletes and increase international exposure for training and competition	8 / 11

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interview questions that were asked to the athletes were:

- Tell me about your time as a member of the (Sport) Malaysian National Team.
- Tell me about the process that you had to go through to be on the national team.
- From your experience, what is/was the government doing to develop potential national athletes?
- Describe the types of structured competitions you competed in prior and during your tenure as a national athlete.
- What types of government support did you receive as an athlete? How did you feel about this support?
- What types of financial support did you receive? Did you feel it was sufficient to support your sporting career? Why or why not?
- What facilities and equipment were provided for you and your team to improve on your athletic ability? How did you feel about the quality and accessibility of these?
- Describe the qualifications and ability of the coaches you worked with.

- What could the government have done differently in terms of providing you support as a national athlete?
- Talk about the post-career support programs the government has provided you with.
- What do you think of the governance, administrators, and management in the National Sports Council of Malaysia and your respective National Sports Organization?
- What recommendations would you give to the government to help improve the quality of sports and improve sports development in Malaysia?