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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Factors Affecting Recruitment and Retention of Different Race Groups in Judo South Africa

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Abstract

Introduction: Judo South Africa currently faces a challenge of low participation in the sport, which is attributed to numerous factors. Judo South Africa (JSA) must understand the barriers and facilitators within the South African context. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for promoting diversity, inclusivity, and equity, given the sport's historical legacy of racial segregation. This study investigated factors that influence the recruitment and retention of individuals from different race groups in JSA.

Material and Methodology: Electronic questionnaires were employed to conduct a focus group, which included 90 elite judokas, 30 technical officials, and 30 coaches. The study design adopted an exploratory approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data. Ethical clearance and permission letters to conduct research and speak to athletes were obtained from the University of Zululand Ethics Committee and Judo South Africa Secretary General, respectively.

Results: Study findings show that most participants believe that barriers to judo participation are often overstated. Athletes, coaches and technical officials indicated that transportation to training venues was not a major issue and agreed that government funding was poor for judo. Lack of quality of coaches and lack of funding, amongst others, was a major barrier to participation in judo.

Discussion: The range of factors influence the attraction and retention of athletes in judo, depending on their social status within their respective communities. Overall, the perceptions of athletes, coaches, and technical officials regarding transportation, facility access, and coaching quality are positive.

Conclusion: The reflections by participants are valuable for fostering a more inclusive and diverse judo community in South Africa. In the context of South Africa, the availability of transportation will ease the participation of athletes in training programs as well as competitions. Common themes that dominated findings were lack of resources, improperly located judo clubs and lack of encouragements from family and friends.

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Introduction

Judo first originated in 1882 when Professor Jigoro Kano established the sport as an educational tool, imparting valuable life lessons such as adherence to rules, cooperation, respect for oneself and others, self-discipline, and humility [1]. Judo stands out as an Olympic sport with a global presence that caters to individuals across a wide age spectrum, ranging from 4-year-olds to those over 60 years old [2] with representation in over 200 National Olympic Committees worldwide, Judo holds the distinction of being one of the most widely practiced Olympic sports in history [3].

Historically, judo athletes in South Africa practiced separately based on race and colour, with black individuals training in townships and white players practicing in designated "whites only" areas [4]. The enactment of the Group Areas Act in the 1950s further worsened the segregation, limiting the ability of judokas to train and live together due to legal restrictions [5]. The year 1994 marked a turning point, as South Africa transitioned into a democratic nation where all races enjoyed freedom of association, location choice, and human rights [6]. This transition catalysed changes in the sports landscape, compelling all sporting federations to unify into one inclusive structure that encompasses all races [7]. Following the democratic transition in 1994, the South Africa government introduced a series of policies aimed at addressing historical injustices and promoting societal transformation. These policies included initiatives such as Transformation Charter, Sports plan, National Development Plan and scorecards [8]. The overarching goal of these interventions was to foster greater equality and a more equitable society. Sport, and Recreation South Africa focuses on aligning activities to its vision of keeping an active nation [8].

As of now, Judo South Africa boasts an active community of approximately eighteen thousand judo practitioners across the country, with over two thousand officially registered and competitive players [2]. Since its inception, Judo South Africa has successfully hosted many international events and established collaborative relationships with prestigious international coaching academies, including Judo-Space Educational Institute and the International Judo Federation academy [9]. The federation's impressive record of accomplishment includes hosting events like the Senior Africa, Junior Africa, and Junior World Championships, as

well as organizing Level 1 international coaching seminars, International Kata seminars, international referee seminars, and the Commonwealth Judo Championships in association with the Commonwealth Judo Association [10].

Judo South Africa, as the governing body of judo, undertakes the responsibility of managing and promoting the sport within the country. This involves the establishment of a comprehensive player registration system, a club coaching framework, a grading system, a selection process, and the structured organization of national training camps, seminars, ranking events, trials, school tournaments, excellence awards, and the pinnacle event of the year, the South African Open Championships [8]. The development of judo among non-white athletes faced hindrances due to sports policies influenced by the political context of the nation [5,11]. The apartheid system, which stripped black individuals of their rights to participate in sports, reserved athletic activities for the white minority population [4]. This legacy still resonates today, as the government grapples with addressing inequalities and imbalances in access to opportunities [12,13].

Participating in sports among secondary school children has historically been a widespread practice, but recent years have witnessed a decline in this trend, which can be attributed to inadequate or non-existent provision of Physical Education (PE) programs in schools. This decline in school-based activities has a detrimental effect on both physical and mental health and raises health risks like cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes [14]. Importantly, the decline in school sport has a negative impact on judo participation, as schools serve as a primary source of talented athletes for the sport's federations.

The influence of sports policies, funding frameworks, and related policy changes is of utmost importance in this research [15]. However, it is equally crucial to delve deeper into the reasons behind the subpar performance of South African judo athletes compared to their counterparts. Policy interventions from Sports Recreation South Africa (SRSA), including the Sports Plan, Transformation Charter, and funding framework, are aimed at achieving redress and fair resource allocation among athletes, federations, and National Olympic Committees [8]. Existing knowledge supplies contextual insights into the country's high-performance landscape and sports administration [16].



This research seeks to investigate the factors that influence participation and performance in the sport of judo within the specific context of South Africa. The motivation behind this study arose from the federation's ongoing challenge in recruiting a larger number of judo participants, a situation clears in Judo South Africa's Information Management System [2]. This concern is further compounded by the suboptimal performance of most South African judo athletes in International Judo Federation competitions [9]. Adding to these complexities is the substantial financial investment directed towards selected judo athletes, aimed at accelerating their technical knowledge and overall development for high-performance endeavours [9]. Despite implementing enhanced interventions, the return on investment for these athletes did not yield the expected results, prompting an examination of how sports policies affect an athlete's international success [17].

Material and Methods

The research was conducted through questionnaires, providing valuable insights into the lived experiences of judokas and offering relevant information about the impact of factors such as transportation, dojo locations, coach quality, socio-economic circumstances, and social support for athletes. The study findings were evaluated using questionnaires, which were distributed to participants via email. These questionnaires aimed to gather information on the participant's individual experiences and perspectives concerning the factors that act as barriers or facilitators to their involvement in judo. Participants were categorized based on their race, gender, and level of participation, and they were requested to rate series of variables on a scale ranging from 0 to 4 (Table 1).

Qualitative data collection was done through a focus group involving diverse participants, including judo coaches, technical officials, and judokas. In terms of participant's race, 28% were white, 56% black and 16% coloured. Regarding category, 54.7% were athletes, 24% coaches and 21,3% technical officials. There were 75 participants of which 68% were males and 32% females.

This comprehensive approach, using multiple methods, aimed to empirically verify and triangulate data, supplying insight into contextual and experiential factors influencing participation [18]. Data analysis followed a structured process of data

inspection, classification, and tabulation [19]. Qualitative data analysis aimed to comprehend participants' perspectives and lived experiences, involving an interactive engagement with collected data [20]. Preliminary data analysis is considered vital regardless of the data source [21]. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) statistical procedure was used, with data consisting of forty-one variables categorized by gender and race. These variables were further organized into five scales for streamlined analysis: Social Justice Scale (RC1), Loyalty Scale (RC2), Scepticism Scale (RC3), Optimism Scale (RC4), and Accessibility Scale (RC5).

This method allows for a comprehensive investigation of the factors influencing judo participation and the experiences of participants within the South African judo context.

Results

Out of the targeted 150 participants, 75 responded, with connectivity limitations and WIFI access contributing to lower response rates. The respondents were categorized by race (28% white, 56% black, 16% coloured), gender (68% male, 32% female), and participation status (54.7% athletes, 24% coaches, 21.3% technical officials). Participants' willingness to engage in discussions contributed to rich data collection [19]. This disparity can be attributed to historical factors, as the three racial groups were historically segregated and experienced differential access to state benefits. Whites were the primary beneficiaries, followed by coloured individuals, and lastly, by black individuals [5].

To simplify the data analysis process, the original forty-one variables were condensed into five distinct scales, the social justice scale, loyalty scale, scepticism scale, optimism scale, and accessibility scale (Table 1). Notably, a consensus among several judo coaches, athletes and technical officials appeared during the study. They expressed the view that the perceived barriers to participation in judo have been overstated. They contended that judo is an inclusive and accessible sport, with training facilities readily available in safe locations and minimal discrimination. However, it was equally emphasized that the lack of government support is the most prominently highlighted obstacle hindering the development of judo [22].

Table 1 shows the principal components loading matrix. PC1 demonstrates a strong positive correlation with variables {18:23,31,35}, which collectively

**Table 1:** Rotated principal components loadings.

	RC1	RC2	RC3	RC4	RC5
It is important to me to participate in judo.	-0.160	0.043	-0.457	-0.105	-0.132
I don't see why I should participate in judo.	-0.028	-0.199	0.326	0.045	0.629
My experience in judo is between 1-5 years.	0.133	0.127	0.794	-0.092	0.223
My experience in judo is over 5 years.	0.038	0.255	-0.650	0.210	0.074
I was introduced to judo by my parents.	0.093	0.204	0.002	-0.089	0.644
I was introduced to judo by my friends.	-0.340	0.106	0.521	0.220	-0.472
Judo is advertised on various media platforms	-0.022	-0.075	0.154	0.335	0.692
I started judo out of my own initiative.	-0.065	0.347	-0.307	0.403	-0.050
Judo training venues are easily accessible.	-0.023	0.228	-0.009	0.705	-0.009
I sponsor my participation in judo.	0.031	0.512	0.050	0.205	0.147
My parents pay for my judo participation.	0.203	0.313	0.445	-0.153	0.389
Judo is adequately funded by the government.	-0.282	0.031	0.184	0.531	0.412
In judo there are equal participation opportunities	0.564	0.120	0.113	0.012	0.086
White and non-white have equal opportunities	0.694	0.147	0.221	0.326	-0.019
People with disabilities participate in judo	0.728	0.141	0.012	-0.295	0.113
Poor people participate in judo.	0.711	-0.126	-0.233	-0.081	-0.045
Race is not a factor in judo.	0.152	0.128	0.051	0.032	0.726
Public transportation plays a critical role in judo.	-0.519	0.230	0.346	0.224	0.160
I travel by public transport to the training venues	-0.085	0.634	-0.306	-0.349	0.072
I travel by public transport to competition venues	-0.382	0.570	0.128	0.109	0.246
I walk 1.5km to training and competition venues	0.277	0.375	0.105	-0.188	-0.162
I walked over 5km to training and competition venues.	0.297	0.642	-0.091	0.181	-0.155
Public transportation is available and reliable. 28.	0.032	0.740	0.005	0.188	0.023
South Africa has excellent Judo coaches	0.195	-0.046	-0.321	-0.064	-0.303
South Africa has high quality judo training facilities	0.091	-0.410	-0.394	0.406	-0.057
Judokas take part internationally	0.596	0.081	0.162	0.056	-0.313
Judokas have opportunities for national participation.	0.350	0.141	0.020	0.093	-0.469
Training venues are situated in safe locations	-0.030	0.078	-0.081	0.784	0.013
Opportunities exist to host international. udo events	0.452	0.570	0.256	0.393	-0.041
Judo is a growing sport in South Africa.	0.636	-0.247	-0.462	-0.002	-0.053

pertain to social justice. Using these variables, we constructed a scale known as the social justice scale. The social justice scale exhibited high reliability, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.80. This scale ranges from 0 to 4, where a value close to 4 indicates that the items {18:23,31,35} strongly resonate with the respondent, while a value close to 0 suggests a strong disagreement (Table 2, figure 1).

Table 3 shows the social justice scale stratified according to Race. On average, the social justice statements were almost true for whites (2.81), slightly true for blacks (2.31) and almost undecided for coloureds (2.16) (Figure 2,3).

PC3 shows a strong positive correlation with variables (6, 8–9, 11, 16, 29), which represent loyalty.

The reliability of the loyalty scale was moderate, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.62. This scale ranges from 0 to 4, where a value close to 4 indicates strong agreement with items (6, 8–9, 11, 16, 29), while a value close to 0 suggests strong disagreement.

Table 4 below shows analyses of the loyalty scale by race. On average, all the racial groups felt that the loyalty statements were not true for them (Figure 4).

PC4 shows a strong positive correlation with statements (13, 14, 17, 33), which represent optimism. The reliability of the optimism scale was moderate, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.62. This scale ranges from 0 to 4, where a value close to 4 indicates that the respondent strongly agrees with statements (13, 14, 17, 33), while a value close to 0 suggests disagreement.

Table 2: Social justice scale by gender.

Factor (Sex)	N	Mean	Sd	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max
Female	24	2.49	0.604	1.50	2.00	2.56	2.88	3.75
Male	51	2.40	0.678	1.12	1.88	2.50	2.94	3.62

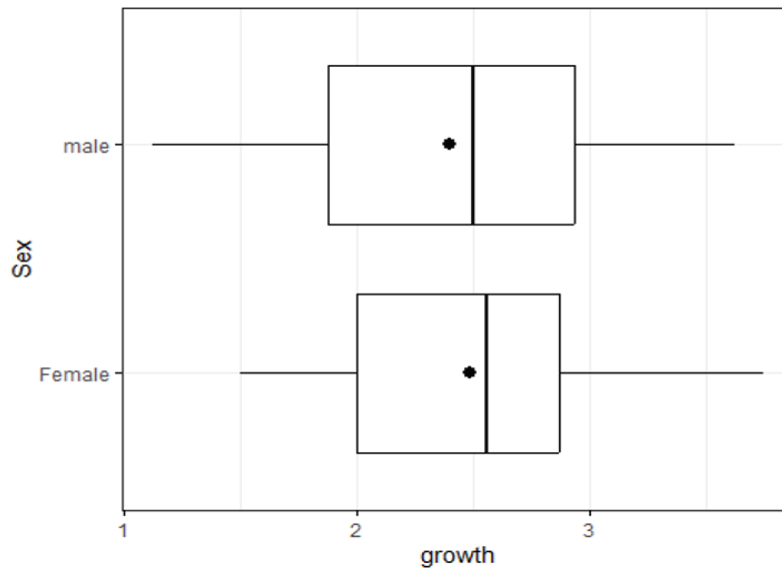


Figure 1 Illustrates the social justice scale, stratified by gender. On average, both males (2.40) and females (2.49) showed that the social justice statements were slightly true for them.

Table 3: Social justice scale by race.

Factor (Race)	N	Mean	Sd	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max
Black	42	2.31	0.582	1.38	1.88	2.38	2.75	3.50
Coloured	12	2.16	0.871	1.12	1.50	1.75	2.97	3.62
White	21	2.81	0.487	1.88	2.62	2.75	3.25	3.75

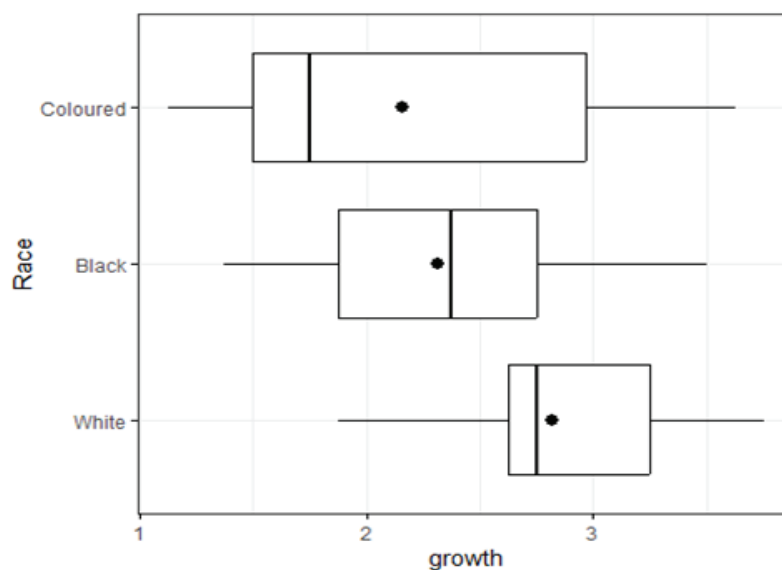


Figure 2 Below shows the social justice scale stratified according to Race. On average, the social justice statements were almost true for whites (2.81), slightly true for blacks (2.31) and almost undecided for coloureds (2.16).

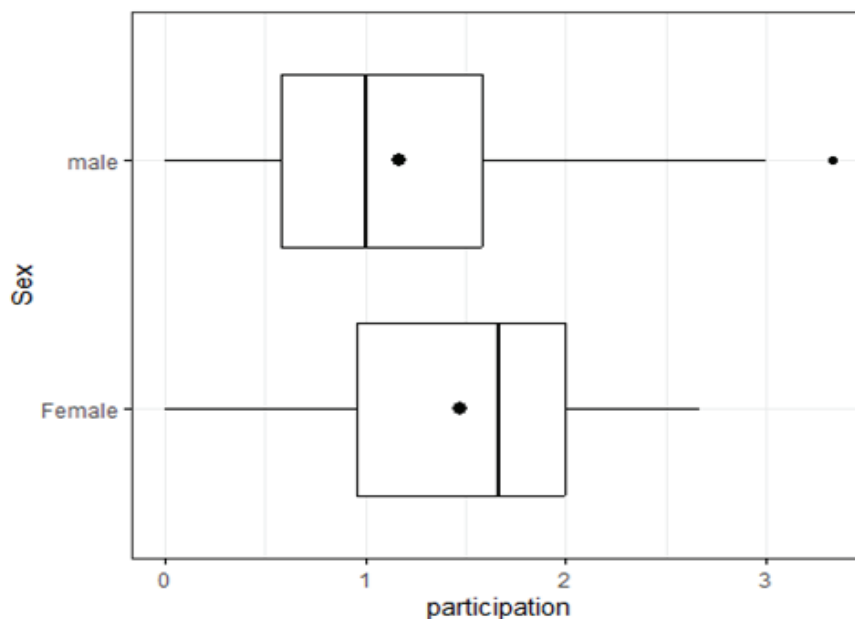


Figure 3 Below analyses the loyalty scale by gender. On average, males had low agreement with the loyalty statements (1.17), while females also had relatively low agreement (1.47).

Table 4: Loyalty scale by race.

Factor (Race)	N	Mean	Sd	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max	Perc Zero
Black	42	1.28	0.785	0.000	0.708	1.167	1.67	3.33	2.38
Coloured	12	1.17	0.721	0.333	0.625	0.917	1.71	2.67	0.00
White	21	1.29	0.837	0.000	0.667	1.500	2.00	2.33	14.29

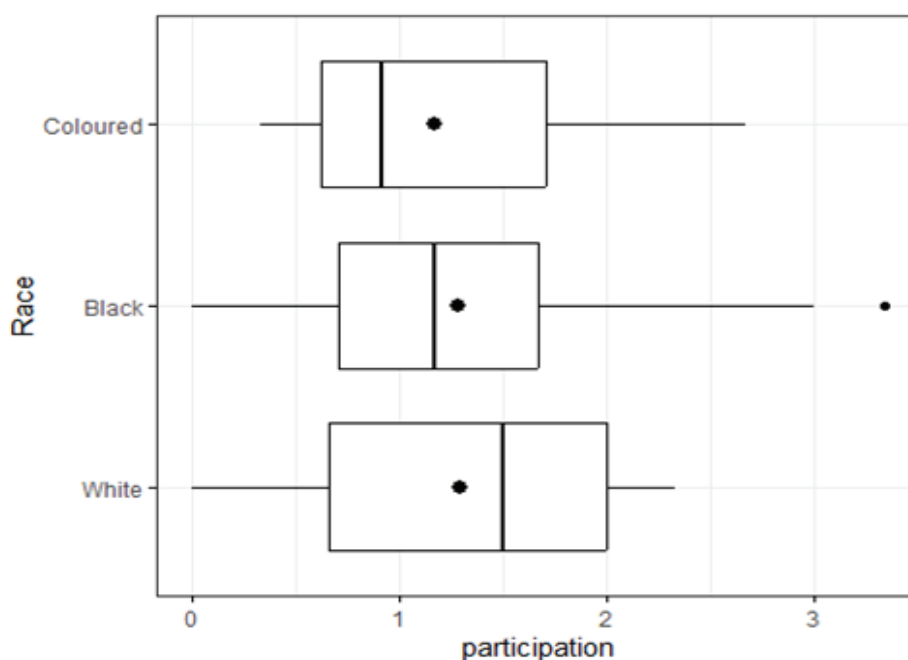


Figure 4 Below analyses the loyalty scale by race. On average, all the racial groups felt that the loyalty statements were not true for them.

These findings provide valuable insights into the beliefs and attitudes of participants within the South African judo community across numerous factors, shedding light on the complex landscape of judo participation and performance.

Discussion

The gender of the participants did not appear to significantly influence their perspectives, as the majority expressed sentiments aligned with those typically associated with males. Despite the historical legacy of apartheid, which left South Africa divided and marked by inequality, most respondents portrayed a more favourable picture about the concept of fair social justice. This perception resulted in more favourable circumstances for participation in judo.

Regarding racial stratification, coloured and white respondents exhibited more alignment in their perspectives compared to black respondents. The athletes unanimously agreed that Judo in South Africa is accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities. However, they expressed a belief that there is a lack of financial support for athletes aiming to participate in the international circuit, which led them to perceive inadequate government support for judo. The study also delves into the psychological and socio-cultural influences that may affect athletes' decisions to engage with Judo and remain committed to the sport over time. Moreover, the research emphasizes the critical need for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment that addresses the unique needs and challenges faced by athletes from various racial backgrounds. The findings of this investigation offer valuable insights for Judo South Africa and relevant sports authorities to develop targeted strategies aimed at reducing racial disparities in recruitment and retention. Through the promotion of diversity and inclusivity within Judo, the sport can serve as a unifying force in South Africa, breaking down historical barriers and nurturing a shared passion for sportsmanship and excellence.

Additionally, the study's outcome shows that athletes, coaches, and administrators shared similar views about the existing facilitators and barriers to participation in judo. The researcher employed rotated principal components, scaled from zero to four, with zero representing "not true for me," one for "almost not true," two for "undecided," three for "almost true," and four for "entirely true" options. The scales were further analysed by race, gender, and

age. Notably, gender was found to be insignificant in deciding what constituted a facilitator or barrier. Both male and female participants expressed similar views, with scales scoring higher and closer to one, showing a consensus in their perspectives. [24] in their study themed "Judo as a tool to reinforce value based education..." indicate that participants confirmed that participation in judo helped bring communities together and that judo is a non-discriminatory sport. These sentiments are in line with views, *inter alia*, expressed by participants in this study.

Under the Social Justice scale (RC1), participants express agreement with statements related to equal participation opportunities in judo, equal opportunities for black and white athletes, disability athlete participation, addressing poor participation, the importance of public transport, international participation, the growth of judo in South Africa, and the absence of race-related issues within Judo South Africa. Their scores, closer to 1, show alignment with these statements.

Regarding the Loyalty scale (RC2), participants appear to agree with statements about the importance of involvement in judo, their experience in judo for five years or more, being introduced to judo by friends, and parents financially supporting their judo activities. However, the variable "excellent judo coaches" receives a lower score, saying that participants do not necessarily believe that there are excellent judo coaches in South Africa.

In the Scepticism scale (RC3), participants agree with statements such as having no reason to take part, parental influence in joining judo, visibility in media platforms, and opportunities for nationals in judo participation. However, there is scepticism regarding government funding, with participants saying that they believe the government is not adequately funding judo.

Within the Optimism scale (RC4), participants differ in their perspectives. While they do not show strong agreement with the statement about their own initiative to start or join judo, they express optimism about easy access to transportation for training and competition and the safe location of training venues. These factors are influential in their judo involvement. In the Accessibility scale (RC5), participants agree with statements suggesting that Judo South Africa could host international events that public transport is reliable and available, and that



athletes often walk long distances to training venues. However, participants express less agreement with the statement about high-quality judo facilities, showing that there might be concerns about the quality of the available facilities.

Conclusion

This study is the first of its kind to investigate and analyse the factors affecting the recruitment and retention of judo participants from various racial backgrounds in South Africa.

The findings indicate that a range of factors influence the attraction and retention of athletes in judo, depending on their social status within their respective communities. Overall, the perceptions of athletes, coaches, and technical officials regarding transportation, facility access, and coaching quality are positive. These factors should be further enhanced to sustain this positive trajectory.

In terms of fundings, it is crucial for Judo South Africa to develop a clear strategy for mobilizing funding beyond its reliance on government support. To accomplish this, efficient management of the federation is paramount, and the consideration of establishing a full-time secretariat can greatly enhance efficiency. Future studies on resource mobilization for athlete support will benefit Judo South Africa in addressing the challenges posed by inadequate government financial support.

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Statement and Declaration

Authors declare that this work is original and all existing knowledge used is cited in recognition of

respective authors.

Consent to Participate

Consent to participate was both written and verbal. Coaches, athletes and administrators were requested, via email, to participate in the interviews and the process was explained and were further requested to indicate their willingness to participate. Thereafter, interview schedule was forwarded to them and during their interviews it was further indicated that if they were still willingly participating and if at any stage, they changed their minds and wished to withdraw, it was confirmed to them that they could do so.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest on any matter relating to this manuscript.

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