

# The effect of sport consumption on citizens national pride and subjective well-being

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to disentangle the relationships that exist between sporting success, sports consumption (i.e., sport participation, sport spectating and sport media viewing), national pride and subjective well-being. Data was collected from 374 respondents. Structural Equation Modelling was used to analyse the variables that were measured in accordance with previous studies. The model which centred on sports consumption showed a great explanatory capacity (73% and 43%). Sport participation was the factor with the highest impact on national pride and subjective well-being, even greater than the effects of sporting success and sport spectating. Another reason for the importance of citizens being physically active was noted. These results have managerial implications for sports policymakers and managers responsible for national teams and sport participation programmes. No evidence was found that higher levels of national pride directly affect subjective well-being.

## KEYWORDS

National Pride; Sports Consumption; Sport Participation; Sporting Success; Subjective Well-being

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sports have a global popularity and an ability to create a strong bond between spectators and athletes. It could even be argued that this is because sport is able to “engage more people in a shared experience than any other institution or cultural activity today” (Burstyn, 1999, pp.3). The essence of global sports has been competition between nations on an international level. In soccer, arguably the world's most popular sport, global rivalries are of paramount importance, and every four years since 1930, major international soccer events have provided that excitement and shared experience.

Major international sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, or the UEFA European Cup have an extraordinary capacity to generate patriotic emotional experiences. In addition to the performance of the teams, the ceremonies of these sporting events include the singing of the national anthem and the display of the national flag, rituals that contribute to the reinforcement of national identity and pride.

This is one of the reasons that mobilise and legitimise continuing and increasing investments by governments in the developed countries - Australia, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Russia - in the performance of the elite sports sector. In England, the following objective has been proposed to the government: “a sustainable improvement in success in international competition, particularly in the sports which matter most to the public, primarily because of the “feelgood factor” associated with winning” (DCMS/Strategy, 2002, pp.12).

In Portugal, the growing profile of the national insignia in international soccer tournaments culminated, in a championship of 55 nations, with the winning of the 2016 UEFA European Cup. This performance was widely interpreted as evidence of the emergence of a renewed Portuguese national consciousness. The Portuguese Football Federation's slogan, which proclaimed during the campaign ‘We are not 11, we are 11 million’, sought to bind all Portuguese citizens to their national team and to evoke feelings of belonging and national pride.

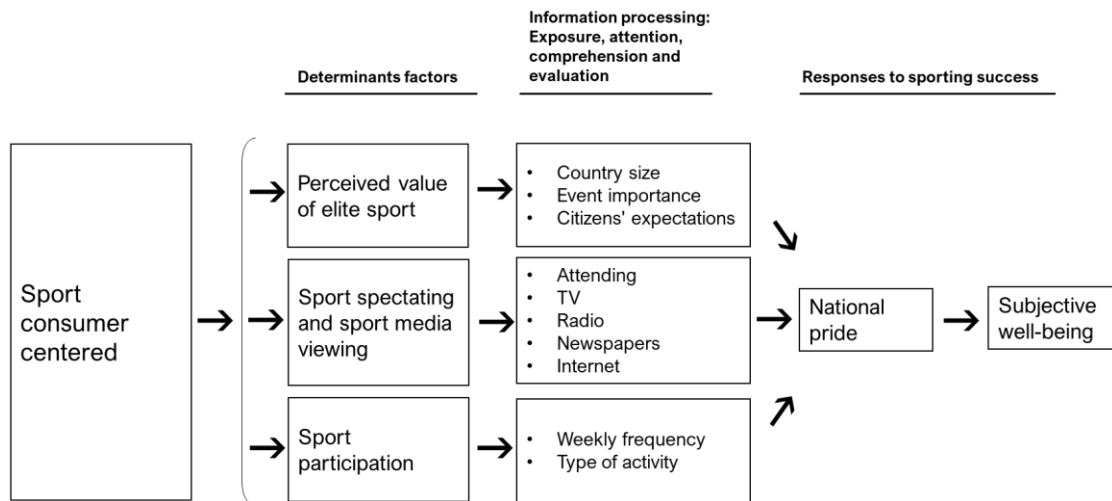
The literature provides many different examples of how elite sport can be a determinant of national identification and social cohesion among a country's citizens. However, the more specific and fundamental question is under what circumstances this effect occurs. Several empirical studies (Elling et al., 2014; Evans & Kelley, 2002; Hallmann, Breuer & Kühnreich, 2013) in different countries have addressed the question of how important elite sport success is for national identification, and especially for national pride.

National pride is one of the most discussed topics, and at the beginning of the 21st century it remains a poorly understood concept (Kersting, 2007). Results have shown that sport is one of the core areas from which national pride derives. In a wide range of countries and in many parts of the world, people are proud of their country's sporting achievements (Evans & Kelley, 2002); only pride in scientific and technological achievements score higher. Besides producing feelings of national pride and identity (Allison & Monnington, 2002), the success of athletes and teams in international sporting competitions has been acting as a general feel-good factor in the population – the so-called 'subjective well-being' (Forrest & Simmons, 2003).

Three research gaps were found in the published literature on reflections on sporting success, national pride, and subjective well-being. A first gap related to the lack of clear and unequivocal effects, such that residual and even zero effects were found between sporting success and national pride (Elling et al., 2014; Haut, Prohl & Emrich, 2016; Kavetsos, 2012; Lechner, 2007; van Hilvoorde, Elling & Stokvis, 2010; van Osch, Zeelenberg & Breugelmans, 2016; Wicker, Prinz & von Hanau, 2012) and between sporting success and subjective well-being (De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, Van Bottenburg & De Knop 2008; Hallmann et al., 2013; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Mutz, 2019; Pawlowski, Downward & Rasciute, 2014; Silva, Monteiro & Sobreiro, 2020). The second gap was related to the divergent results observed in both small and large countries (De Bosscher et al., 2008; Evans & Kelley, 2002; Elling et al., 2014; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010), and the third gap resulted from the divergence between results found among spectators, those who follow the sport through the media (TV, radio, newspapers and internet) and those who have no interest at all in sports, as far as national pride is concerned (Bernache-Assollant, Chantal, Bouchet & Kada, 2021; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Kersting, 2007; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Leng, Kuo, Baysa-Pee & Tay, 2014; Leng, Kuo, Baysa-Pee & Tay, 2015; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010) as well as with regard to subjective well-being (Becchetti, Pelloni & Rossetti, 2008; Elling et al., 2014; Inoue, Sato, Filo, Du & Funk, 2017; Kim, Kim & Kim, 2017; Kim & James, 2019; Mutz, 2019; Pawlowski et al., 2014).

It is therefore important to conduct a more detailed assessment of national pride and the factors that determine it. After all, in the eyes of its citizens, what brings promotion, reputation and prestige to a country? Does the perception of the superior value of national sport, expressed by sporting achievements and successes at international level, produce higher levels of national pride throughout the population? Are national pride and subjective well-being determined by individuals who follow sports through the media? And does sport participation by individuals influence levels of national pride?

To understand better the relationships between sporting success, sport consumption (i.e., sport participation, sport spectating and sport media viewing), national pride and subjective well-being, a study was conducted by means of a global model using Structural Equation Modelling. Figure 1 below shows the impact of sports consumption on national pride and subjective well-being.



**Figure 1.** Systematisation of centred consumption sport factors with an impact on national pride and subjective well-being

The model was specified to enable the evaluation of the relative and integrated importance of the predictor constructs and is supported by the following propositions: (1) the perceived value of elite sports, (2) sport spectating, and (3) sport participation act as a source of formation of (4) national pride, which together lead to the formation of (5) subjective well-being of individuals.

The objectives of the present study are to determine the direct effects of the perceived value of elite sport, sport spectating, and sport participation on national pride and on subjective well-being; as well as to determine the direct effects of national pride on subjective well-being.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. National pride

National pride as well as nationalism, are aspects of national identity (Miller & Ali, 2014), although they are often used as synonyms for national identity. National identity is the cohesive force that holds nation-states together and shapes their relations with other peer nations (Smith & Kim, 2006).

National pride is the positive affection that people feel toward their country as a result of their national identity (Kersting, 2007; Smith & Kim, 2006). It corresponds to positive feelings derived from certain specific national achievements, such as economic performance or sporting success (Miller & Ali, 2014). National pride involves a favourable evaluation of what the country has

achieved so far and includes both admiration and shared accomplishment when someone accomplishes an achievement or possesses an admirable quality (Evan & Kelley, 2002).

From a theoretical perspective, studies of heroic action could benefit from focusing on the interplay between rationality, norms, and identity (Olberg, 1995). That is why the interdisciplinary theory of collective pride is proposed (Sullivan, 2014), which includes some elements of the interaction ritual theory (Collins, 2004). This approach holds that group-based emotion can be experienced in isolation as residual effects of social structures, that is, people who identify more strongly with a group tend to experience and express group emotions to a greater extent than weakly identified people, a situation that is particularly clear for positive group emotions (e.g., happiness and pride) (Sullivan, 2014).

## **2.2. Perceived value of elite sports, national pride and subjective well-being**

In most modern countries, elite sport is considered one of the main vehicles for building and maintaining an idea of national unity and national pride (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010).

However, the performance of elite sport shows some differences between countries, especially in small ones, which take great pride in their national sport (Elling et al., 2014; Evans & Kelley, 2002). This is the case of Portugal, which, with a relatively small population and a limited budget for sports, finds it difficult to obtain prestigious international sports results. The explanation for these results in small countries may be found in the organisation of international sports. Through the Olympic Games, World and European Championships, and even the Commonwealth Games, small countries are given representation as equals to large countries and thus receive international recognition that they could not otherwise have achieved. For example, relatively small countries, such as Ireland (39th place in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games medals ranking: four) and Austria (53rd place), showed very high results in terms of national pride for their sporting achievements.

Although sporting success is recognised as having an impact on citizens, producing feelings of national pride (Allison & Monnington, 2002; Wicker et al., 2012), what is known is that sport in itself does not seem to play such a crucial role, but merely contributes to maintaining a certain level of national pride, promoting only short-term peaks (Elling et al., 2014); i.e., it has been found that the extent to which national pride can be increased appears to be quite limited, and the strength of this potential effect may vary depending on the importance of the event and the role of expectation narratives prior to the start of it (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). Although national pride may experience

small and temporary fluctuations, there does seem to be evidence that national pride is considered to be a stable characteristic (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). This seems to be an irrefutable fact judging by the marked consistency of countries' positions in national pride rankings (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010), such that the results do not fully confirm the hypothesis that sporting success contributes to general national pride (Elling et al., 2014).

In other words, research has shown that there is no reliable empirical evidence indicating the existence of a clear intrinsic relationship between sporting success and national pride; rather, there are even contradictory results.

On the one hand, there is actually a body of research that has shown that sport is capable of generating shared community passion and a sense of national pride, of which we highlight eight references: 1) In a comparative analysis of 24 countries, the inhabitants of many of them indicated that they gained national pride from their country's sporting achievements (Evans & Kelley, 2002); 2) The only statistically significant coefficient on national pride was that associated with winning the 2000 UEFA European Cup tournament (Kavetsos, 2012); 3) In an international comparison, the majority of inhabitants of 18 out of 20 countries studied indicated that national sport contributed to feelings of national pride (Mower, 2012) and no notable cross-cultural differences were observed (van Osch et al., 2016); 4) 66.2% of respondents felt proud when German athletes succeeded in major events (Hallmann et al., 2013); 5) The international performance of Dutch athletes contributed to the witnessing and expression of national pride (Elling et al., 2014); 6) International sport is an increasingly important source of pride in Germany (Meier & Mutz, 2016); and finally 7) When the German national team won the FIFA World Cup in 2014, there was a small but significant increase in national pride; and in 2018, when the German team was eliminated in the group stage, there was a small but significant decrease in national pride, but these effects were temporary and therefore not sustainable (Gassmann, Haut & Emrich. 2020).

On the other hand, it is also possible to systematize five references with distinct results: 1) Moderate changes in national pride were shown during the period between 1995 and 2004, which underlines the rather consistent characteristic of the concept, which cannot be easily increased by improving national sporting success and winning more Olympic medals (Elling et al., 2014; Smith and Kim, 2006); 2) Sports pride was not significantly higher around the 2010 FIFA World Cup when compared to other sporting events, such as, the 2010 Winter Olympic Games (Elling et al., 2014), such that, as Lechner (2007) notes, beyond the game, soccer does little to cement collective identity; 3) Dutch international sporting achievements did not directly lead to an increase in overall feelings of

national pride (Elling et al., 2014); 4) Like other studies (e.g., van Hilvoorde et al., 2010), in the men's European Football Championships in the Netherlands, the Tour de France, Wimbledon and the Olympic Games in Beijing (all in the summer of 2008), the assumption was not found to be true that medals in general increase national pride, or that they fulfil the claimed representational function (Haut et al., 2016); and 5) International sporting success was not a significant motivator of national pride (Storm & Jakobsen, 2020).

In summary, despite this broad picture of divergent results, it seems plausible that the value placed by the population on their country's elite sport may lead to an increase in national pride, so the following hypothesis was put forward:

- H1: The perceived value of elite sport has a positive and direct effect on national pride.

### **2.3. Perceived value of elite sports and subjective well-being**

The philosophy behind the sports development model in most developed countries (e.g., United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, among others), is called the 'virtuous cycle' of sport, in which elite sport success is seen as an international prestige factor for the nation, bringing a general feel-good factor to the population (Grix & Carmichael, 2012).

The well-being of population members has already been identified as the key to creating and maintaining healthy people and productive societies (Diener & Suh, 1997).

Different approaches have been investigating people's quality of life and well-being over time. Subjective well-being is an area of psychology that has grown a lot recently, covering studies that have used many different designations, such as happiness and life satisfaction. In general, it can be said that the topic focuses on how people evaluate their lives (Diener, 1996). As in other studies (Hallmann et al., 2013), 'subjective well-being' is used in this study as a synonym for 'happiness'.

The definitions of subjective well-being can be grouped into three domains (Diener, 1984). We chose to adopt the one formulated by social research, which looks into how and why individuals evaluate their lives positively. This dimension has been gaining attention among sociologists and stands out as the main indicator of well-being (Giacomini, 2004). Subjective well-being corresponds to 'a varied set of phenomena that includes individuals' emotional responses, specific satisfactions of certain areas, and overall judgements of satisfaction with life' (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999, pp.277).

Although the idea that elite sport affects national pride, and thereby the sense of well-being, has already been highlighted (De Bosscher et al., 2008; Hallmann et al., 2013; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010), the subjective well-being of a population directly associated with sporting success has been poorly explored (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). Furthermore, the literature review shows divergent results that need further investigation.

On the one hand, 1) The success of athletes and national teams at major sporting events is associated with a population well-being factor (Mutz, 2019; Wicker et al., 2012), such that 65.6% of respondents were happy when German athletes were successful at major events (Hallmann et al., 2013); 2) It has been shown that the perceived value of elite sport has a positive and significant impact on individuals' subjective well-being (Silva et al., 2020); 3) What has been highlighted is that when national sport performances occur at a level above what was expected, they tend to generate a higher level of subjective well-being, than when the performance took place at the level predicted (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). This was the case with the (unexpected) success of Germany, host of the 2006 FIFA World Cup, which exerted an important effect on the well-being of the population (Porsche & Maennig, 2008); and 4) Spectators' emotions were mainly positive after victories (e.g., Bernache-Assollant et al., 2021), such that it has been reported that subjective well-being (happiness) is in general positively affected when performance is better than expected, but the effect is rarely significant (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010), i.e., there were only small incidences of feelings of well-being (Elling et al., 2014).

On the other hand, results in a different direction have been observed: 1) The success of national teams in the Olympic Games and, only marginally, major international soccer competitions, affected only to a very limited extent subjective well-being (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010); 2) Nations that achieved higher levels in competition had significantly higher life satisfaction scores, although the coefficient was very small, and surprisingly the statistically insignificant coefficient was associated with the winner of the tournament (Kavetsos, 2012); 3) General well-being was affected to a very limited extent at various sporting events, such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Elling et al., 2014); 4) Sporting success does not seem to have a direct link to subjective well-being (Pawlowski et al., 2014); 5) There were found to be differences between pride and happiness across nationality for national and Olympic Games. Chinese athletes were perceived to express more pride than happiness at national games, and American athletes were perceived to express more happiness than pride at national championships (van Osch et al., 2016); and finally, 6) The perceived sporting success of Dutch athletes only led to small short-term positive effects on subjective well-being (Elling et al.,



2014); and statistically significant negative effects were even shown on life satisfaction (Kavetsos, 2012).

Given the above, rather inconsistent results should be the focus of future research (Kavetsos, 2012). Despite the divergence of the results found, therefore, it seems plausible that the perceived value of elite sport may exert influence on the subjective well-being of individuals, and so the following hypothesis was formulated:

- H2: The perceived value of elite sport has a positive and direct effect on subjective well-being.

#### **2.4. Sport spectating and national pride**

The relationship between fans and sport is a truly ubiquitous phenomenon in western culture. Attendance figures for major sporting events continue to rise, and with each passing year, more and more fans go to see their favourite team play. About 70% of Americans watch, read or discuss sports at least once a day (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). US TV viewing usually hits a high of 19.4 million on a Sunday night, but that audience declined by 36% in 2016, when 26.5 million people watched the Rio de Janeiro Games opening ceremony (Coster, 2021). Total Rio 2016 Olympic Games broadcast content viewed online was over double that of London 2012 and 2.6 billion viewers watched at least 15 minutes of broadcast on television (IOC, 2016). A record 3.572 billion people followed the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia (FIFA, 2018), and a total of 1.1 million people watched the matches of the 2020 UEFA European Cup (held in 2021) live in the stadium (UEFA, 2021). With such a large proportion of the population involved in sports, as spectators and followers in person, it is not surprising that reflections have been made on the functions that sports can play for spectators and followers via the media (TV, internet, radio and newspapers).

The literature suggests that as a function of exposure to different life experiences, there are differences in the level of national pride (Leng et al., 2015). However, what is known is that exposure to sporting events generates an increase in national pride, although this increase is small and temporary (Bernache-Assollant et al., 2021; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Kersting, 2007; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Leng et al., 2014, 2015; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). There is inevitably a part of a population that may not be interested and emotionally involved in the country's sporting achievements. For example, in the former GDR, sporting successes were huge, and the number of Olympic medals increased, but this did not lead to greater national pride (Grix, 2008).

Feelings of national pride at sporting events are not exclusive to spectators present at stadiums or sports facilities. These feelings can also be experienced by individuals who have access to television or the Internet, as major sporting events are covered by these media. Sports media tend to reiterate the glorious moments in a country's sporting history and, in doing so, portray the national team and its medal hopes in a way that enhances nationalistic feelings (Lee & Maguire, 2009; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). In contrast to the effects on non-spectators, the opportunity to witness the nation's achievements at international competitions involving flag-raising ceremonies and the singing of the national anthem, as well as the athletes' own performance over their opponents, has effects, albeit temporary, on national pride (Leng et al., 2015; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010).

So, it seems plausible that attending sports events as well as following them via the media (TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers) can exert an influence on feelings of national pride, and the following hypothesis was therefore formulated:

- H3: Sport spectating has a positive and direct effect on national pride.

## **2.5. Sport spectating and subjective well-being**

Many studies have shown that leisure sports activities are related to subjective well-being (Bize, Johnson & Plotnikoff, 2007; Mutz, 2019; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017). The subjective well-being effect triggered by leisure has been justified by claiming that leisure activities satisfy a person's basic needs, for example, relationship needs, aesthetic and mastery experiences, distinction, health, etc. (Sirgy, Uysal & Kruger, 2017). However, few studies have addressed how passive consumption of sporting events via the media (TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers) relates to subjective well-being (Mutz, 2019).

The results of research on sporting events are inconclusive. Some studies suggest that well-being increases during large sporting events, while others fail to establish this relationship (Mutz, 2019). On the one hand, it has been shown that sport spectators' attendance (i.e., sport spectating and sport media viewing) has a positive relationship with long- and short-term subjective well-being (Kim and James, 2019); sports consumption (watching a sporting event on TV or internet) experienced by sport event viewers leads to well-being improvement (Kim et al., 2017); the relationship of being a live spectator of elite sports events increases well-being (Inoue et al., 2017); and finally, a significant positive effect of attending sports events on subjective well-being has been found (Pawlowski et al., 2014). It has even been suggested that a country hosting events may be more

important than being successful at those events, substantiated by the positive association between attendance, enjoyment of attending sporting events (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010) and the subjective well-being of the population (Pawlowski et al., 2014).

On the other hand, there are some divergences: subjective well-being is only higher among individuals who are generally interested in soccer broadcasts (e.g., 2016 UEFA European Cup) than among individuals uninterested in soccer (Mutz, 2019), and the frequency of attendance at social and sporting events (Becchetti, Pelloni & Rossetti, 2008) allows us to observe only some increases in the well-being experienced around sporting events (Elling et al., 2014).

Thus, despite the divergences found, it seems plausible that sport spectating and sport media viewing can exert an influence on individuals' subjective evaluation of well-being, so the following hypothesis was formulated:

- H4: Sport spectating has a positive and direct effect on subjective well-being.

## **2.6. Sport participation, national pride and subjective well being**

National pride has been significantly explained by reference to sport participation and socio-economic variables (Hallmann et al., 2013). Evidence has shown that of people who played sports (who were active in sports), 81% shown much more pride in sports achievements than people who did not participate in sports (71%) (Elling et al., 2014); and about 58% of those who played sports in the week before the survey was carried out, felt proud of the Netherlands, compared to 53% of those who did not play sports (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010).

Assuming this evidence, the degree to which being a regular sports practitioner influences levels of national pride may be due to the fact that the physical effort associated with sport participation may influence the evaluation of the importance attributed to the sports achievements of a country's athletes, which also involve high levels of physical effort and perseverance.

Thus, the following hypothesis was put forward:

- H5: Sport participation has a positive and direct effect on national pride.

## 2.7. Sport participation and subjective well-being

The positive health effects of physical activity for adults of all ages are well documented in the literature (Wicker & Frick, 2017). Physical activity not only helps to reduce a range of negative outcomes (e.g., weight gain and depressive symptoms), but also promotes a range of positive outcomes, such as higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being (Dolan, Peasgood & White, 2008; Kekäläinen, Sipilä & Kokko, 2020; Wiese, Kuykendall & Tay, 2018). Consequently, participation in physical activity has been recommended by various health organisations to promote public health, two examples being: a) World Health Organisation guidelines on physical activity on the path to well-being (WHO, 2020); b) European Union Physical Activity Guidelines, Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (European Commission, 2013).

Overall, the reviewed literature identifies subjective well-being gains from mass sport participation (Huang & Humphreys, 2012; Kim & James, 2019; Lechner, 2007; Pawlowski et al., 2014). However, the magnitude of the effects of sports participation on subjective well-being may depend on the type of sport played, as is the case with sports that involve greater levels of social interactions (Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Rasciute & Downward, 2010). Total minutes of sport activity over four weeks has a direct and indirect effect on subjective well-being (Downward, Hallmann & Rasciute, 2018); the global personal well-being of adult participants is higher overall in park runners (Grunseit, Richards & Merom, 2018); sport participation, in terms of frequency and volume, has been shown to affect individuals' subjective well-being positively and directly (Moradi, Nima, Ricciardi, Archer & Garcia, 2014; Silva et al., 2020). However, the effect of physical activity intensity on subjective well-being is not well established (Panza, Taylor, Thompson, White & Pescatello, 2019), and there are a number of divergent results: 1) In people aged 18 to 64 years, walking (minutes and days of physical activity per week) and vigorous activities (minutes/week) showed a significant positive effect on subjective well-being, while moderate activities (minutes/week) had a negative effect (Wicker & Frick, 2017); and 2) Time spent in light and moderate intensity physical activity showed a positive relationship with well-being, but not vigorous physical activity (Panza et al., 2019).

Although it requires further validation, the evidence available to date suggests that sport participation alone has little or no effect on assessments of subjective well-being; in fact, its effect comes indirectly through the mediation of health and other outcomes that sport helps to promote (Testoni, Mansfield & Dolan, 2018).

From the discussion above, the following was therefore hypothesised:

- H6: Sport participation has a positive and direct effect on subjective well-being.

## **2.8. National pride and subjective well-being**

The success of athletes and teams in international sports competitions, in addition to affecting feelings of identity and national pride (Allison & Monnington, 2002), also seems to be the cause of a positive feeling in the population (Forrest and Simmons, 2003).

The literature on subjective well-being, especially since the works of Dolan et al. (2008); Frey (2008), has shown a growth in evaluating the direct impact of national pride on subjective well-being. However, national pride has received little attention as a determinant of subjective well-being (Ounusic & Mendes-da-Silva, 2015) and only a few studies have analysed the direct effects of national pride on subjective well-being (Hallmann et al., 2013).

A sense of pride in one's country is one of the relevant factors that seems to contribute to increased life satisfaction. From an international survey, evidence was found that national pride can be a strong predictor of life satisfaction (Kavetsos, 2012; Morrison, Tay & Diener, 2011). In the context of Latin American countries, pride in being Brazilian was found to affect the likelihood of a person reporting as being very happy (Onusic & Mendes-da-Silva, 2015).

However, the results remain unclear: 1) the assumption of the Hallmann et al. (2013) model that national pride and happiness (i.e., subjective well-being) are independent was confirmed; and 2) the hypothesis that pride arising from international sporting success can directly contribute to subjective well-being was not confirmed (Elling et al., 2014).

Even so, given the divergences found, the following hypothesis was put forward:

- H7: National pride has a positive and direct effect on subjective well-being.

## **3. METHODS**

### **3.1. Participants**

A sample selected by convenience from the Portuguese population was the target sample for the study. A total of 374 individuals participated in this study (68.7% were men and 31.3% women). 23.5% of the respondents were between 15 and 24 years old, 19.0% between 25 and 34, 13.9% between 35 and 44, 15.2% between 45 and 54, 13.4% between 55 and 64, and 7.2% over 65 years

old. 7.8% did not answer the question on age ( $M = 39.50$ ;  $SD = 16.28$ ). The majority of respondents (45.2%) were single with married and in a consensual union being 42.5%. Educational qualifications were as follows: 37.2% held a Bachelor's degree, 21.9% a Masters or Ph.D. and 29.9% had completed secondary school. Professional occupations were: 50.3% were employed in a paid activity, 24.9% were students, and 9.6% were retired. Participants did not receive monetary remuneration for participation.

Questionnaires were collected from a sample of individuals residing in Portugal. The survey was conducted in June 2018. Subjects were recruited through an email containing a link to an online web survey. The questionnaire contained questions about the concepts of the theoretical investigation. In the introduction to the questionnaire, the respondents were told that the survey was anonymous, and that personal data would be treated confidentially.

## **3.2. Instruments**

### **3.2.1. Subjective well-being**

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Horwitz, and Emmons, 1985), used in previous research (Kavetsos and Szymanski, 2010; OECD, 2013), was adopted to measure the overall subjective well-being through a single item: 'I am satisfied with my life.' Ordinal scale: 0 = Not satisfied at all to 10 = Extremely satisfied, Portuguese version, adapted by Simões, Ferreira, Lima, Pinheiro, Vieira, Matos & Oliveira (2003).

### **3.2.2. National pride**

We adopted the scale proposed by Evans and Kelley (2002) and Kersting (2007), in relation to 10 items: How proud are you of Portugal in each of the following areas: Scientific and technological achievements; Achievements in art and literature; Achievements in sports; Economic achievements; Armed forces; History; The way democracy works; Political influence; Fair treatment of all groups; Social security system. Ordinal scale: 1 = Not proud at all; 4 = Somewhat proud/not very proud; 7 = Very proud.

### **3.2.3. Perceived value of elite sports**

The scale proposed by the Consejo Superior de Deportes (2011) was adopted to measure the perceived value of Portugal's position in high competition sport, by reference to two items: Currently, in the international context, the position of Portuguese high-competition sport is: 1 = Extremely bad,

2 = Very poor, 3 = Bad, 4 = Fair, 5 = Good, 6 = Very good, 7 = Extremely good; and compared to 10 years ago, in the international context, globally, the position of Portuguese high competition sport is: 1 = Considerably worse than 10 years ago; 2 = Much worse; 3 = Worse; 4 = Equal; 5 = Better; 6 = Much better; 7 = Considerably better than 10 years ago.

#### **3.2.4. Sports spectating**

To measure attendance in person at sports events or consumption via the media, the scales proposed in several studies were adopted (Andrew, Kim, O'Neal, Greenwell & James, 2009; Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer & Exler, 2008; Funk & Pastore, 2000; Kim, Andrew & Greenwell, 2009; Kim & Trail, 2010). These scales are composed of four items: During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you watch LIVE at events/games of your preferred sport?; During the last 3 months, on average, how often have you watched events/games of your preferred sporting mode, ON THE TELEVISION?; During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you follow the news of your favourite sport, ON THE RADIO?; During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you follow the news of the preferred sport, ON THE INTERNET?; During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you follow the news of the preferred sport, IN THE NEWSPAPERS? Ordinal scale: 1 = Never to 7 = Very often.

#### **3.2.5. Sport participation**

The scale used to measure the monthly frequency of physical activity was adapted from the European Commission (2015), using one item: In the last month, how often did you exercise or play sport? Metric scale: 1 = Never; 2 = one to three times a month; 3 = one to two times a week; 4 = three to four times a week; 5 = five times a week or more. For demographic information (i.e., age, gender, region, marital status, education, occupation) questions in dropdown menus were included. An expert review panel was engaged to adapt the instruments and scales from the original language to the Portuguese language following the procedures defined by Vallerand (1989).

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

Structural Equation Modelling (Arbuckle, 2007) was used for analysing the plausibility of the theoretical and conceptual model. The usage of such techniques requires the fulfilment of a set of assumptions, such as the sample size ( $n = 374$ ), to ensure sufficient variability to estimate the model parameters. To test the hypothetical associations between the present variables in the model, which

identifies the sources of possible unacceptable adjustment of the general model, the recommendations of two steps by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) were adopted. The first step was to evaluate the quality of the measurement and psychometric properties of the constructs present in the global model. The second step was to evaluate the quality of the adjustment of the structural model and to test the hypotheses.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Test of psychometric properties

After screening for missing data and outliers, the assumptions of normality, singularity, and linearity were tested. Sixteen cases considered to be outliers were removed, leaving the final sample with 358 observations. Mardia's coefficient of multivariate kurtosis indicated violation of multivariate normality (30.451,  $p < 0.05$ ); the correction of Satorra & Bentler (1994) was employed.

Using AMOS (Arbuckle, 2007) a confirmatory factor analysis for fulfilment scales was conducted. All factor weights for each of the items, were considered statistically significant with  $p \leq 0.05$  and with a factor weight ( $\lambda_{ij}$ ) superior to 0.50, the value expressing the construct's factor validity (Marôco, 2014).

All factor loadings [ $\lambda$ ] were greater than 0.50, construct reliabilities [CR] were greater than 0.70, and average variance extracted [AVE] values were greater than 0.50; interfactor correlations were less than 0.85 and squared interconstruct correlations were smaller than the respective AVE values (Kline, 2015), as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Psychometric properties

<b>Constructs and items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b><math>\lambda^{**}</math></b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<b>Subjective well-being</b>	<b>7.19</b>	<b>2.055</b>		<b>0.774</b>	<b>0.774</b>
SWB1 - Overall, I am satisfied with my life	7.19	2.055	0.880		
<b>National pride</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>1.088</b>		<b>0.882</b>	<b>0.430</b>
NP1 - Scientific and technological achievements	5.01	1.420	0.653		
NP2 - Achievements in art and literature	4.90	1.428	0.602		
NP3 - Achievements in sports	5.66	1.421	0.622		
NP4 - Economic achievements	3.78	1.613	0.742		
NP5 - Armed forces	4.24	1.701	0.598		
NP6 - History	5.87	1.388	0.503		
NP7 - The way democracy works	4.09	1.752	0.735		
NP8 - Political influence	3.78	1.577	0.737		
NP9 - Fair treatment of all groups	3.67	1.777	0.646		



NP10 - Social security system	3.52	1.578	0.680		
<b>Perceived value of elite sports</b>	<b>5.03</b>	<b>0.998</b>		<b>0.704</b>	<b>0.544</b>
PV1 - Currently, in the international context, the position of Portuguese high-competition sport is	4.98	1.116	0.794		
PV2 - Compared to 10 years ago, in the international context, globally, the position of Portuguese high competition sport is	5.09	1.175	0.677		
<b>Sport spectating</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>1.446</b>		<b>0.778</b>	<b>0.417</b>
SS1 - During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you watch LIVE at events/games of your preferred sport?	3.47	2.292	0.510		
SS2 - During the last 3 months, on average, how often have you watched events/games of your preferred sporting mode, ON THE TELEVISION?	4.93	1.912	0.750		
SS3 - During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you follow the news of your favourite sport, ON THE RADIO?	3.25	2.006	0.577		
SS4 - During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you follow the news of your preferred sport, ON THE INTERNET?	5.32	1.803	0.759		
SS5 - During the last 3 months, on average, how often did you follow the news of your preferred sport, IN THE NEWSPAPERS?	3.97	2.069	0.595		
<b>Sport participation</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>1.347</b>		<b>0.482</b>	<b>0.482</b>
SP1 - In the last month, how often did you exercise or play sport?	3.02	1.347	0.694		

Note: SD - Standard deviation;  $\lambda$  – Factor loadings - CR - Composite reliability; AVE - Average variance extracted; All items \*\*  $p < 0.001$

The scales had good construct validity, reliability, and applicability for analysis in Structural Equation Modelling (Arbuckle, 2007). The first step assessed the quality of measures and psychometric properties of the constructs present in the global model, based on the Byrne (2010) model fit. This was not perfect ( $\chi^2/df = 5.105$ ) but reasonable: [RMSEA] = 0.10, P [rmsea  $\leq$  0.05] = .000; IC a 90% [.10 - 0.11], [CFI] = 0.77, [GFI] = 0.77, [PCFI] = 0.65, [PGFI] = 0.59 [SRMR] = 0.20. A reasonable fit was deemed sufficient for the model because the goal of the statistical model was to develop a model that approximated the reality with parsimony.

#### 4.2. Test of hypotheses

Model fit was reasonable: ( $\chi^2/df = 11.481$ ) [RMSEA] = 0.17, P[rmsea  $<$  0.05] = .000; IC a 90% [.16 - 0.17], [CFI] = 0.36, [GFI] = 0.58, [PCFI] = 0.33, [PGFI] = 0.48 [SRMR] = 0.87.

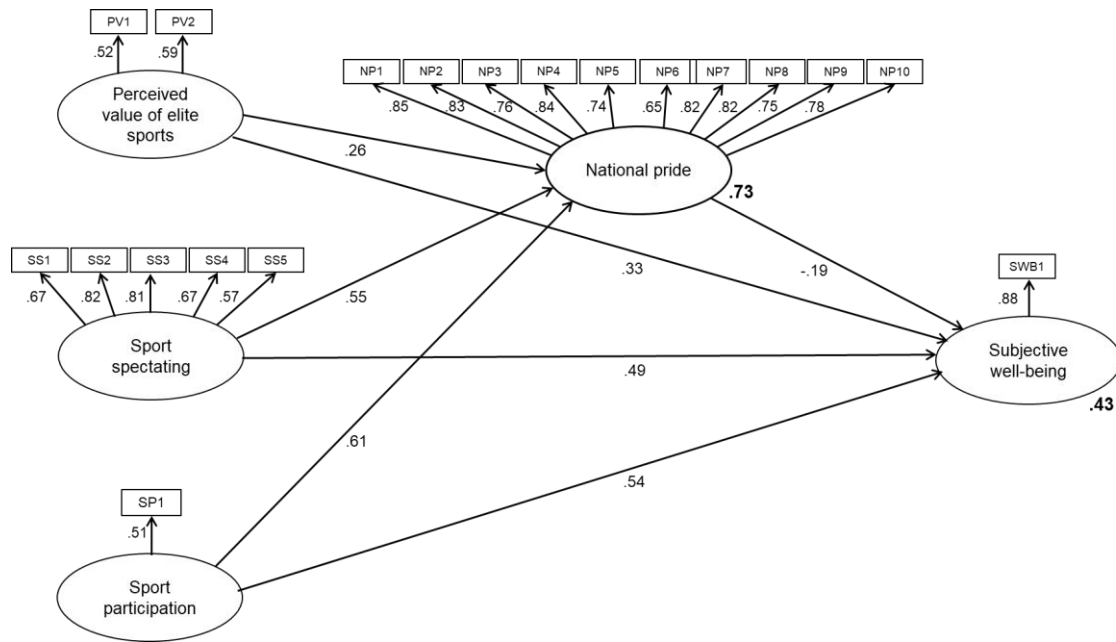
Perceived value of elite sports exerted a positive and significant effect on national pride ( $\beta = 0.26, p < 0.001$ ), therefore confirming H1. Perceived value of elite sports had a positive significant predictive action on subjective well-being ( $\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting H2. Sport spectating exerted a positive and significant effect on national pride ( $\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$ ), therefore confirming H3. Sport spectating had a positive significant predictive action on subjective well-being ( $\beta = 0.49, p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting H4. Sport participation exerted a positive and significant effect on national pride ( $\beta = 0.61, p < 0.001$ ), therefore confirming H5. Sport participation had a positive significant predictive action on subjective well-being ( $\beta = 0.54, p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting H6. National pride exerted a negative and significant effect on subjective well-being ( $\beta = -.19, p < 0.05$ ), thus not confirming H7, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Standardised coefficients of the structural model of subjective well-being

<b>H</b>	<b>Hypothesis/pathway</b>	<b>Confirmation</b>	<b>Standardised trajectory coefficient (<math>\beta</math>)</b>
H1	Perceived value of elite sports → National pride	Yes	0.26**
H2	Perceived value of elite sports → Subjective well-being	Yes	0.33**
H3	Sport spectating → National pride	Yes	0.55**
H4	Sport spectating → Subjective well-being	Yes	0.49**
H5	Sport participation → National pride	Yes	0.61**
H6	Sport participation → Subjective well-being	Yes	0.54**
H7	National pride → Subjective well-being	No	-0.19*

Note. \*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

In the overall model designed, the explanatory capacity of the predictor constructs of national pride and subjective well-being regarding the formation of national pride was 73%, with subjective well-being being explained by 43%, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Standardized parameters of the structural model of hypothesis testing national pride and subjective well-being

## 5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to evaluate the direct effects of the perceived value of elite sports, sport spectating, and sport participation on national pride and subjective well-being. For this purpose, a structural model was designed which established that (1) the perceived value of elite sports, 2) sport spectating and 3) sport participation all act as a source of formation of (4) national pride, which together leads to the generation of (5) subjective well-being of individuals.

The results obtained allow us to show that the global model designed presented a relevant capacity to explain national pride and subjective well-being. National pride was explained in 73% ( $R^2 = 0.73$ ) by the predictors which perceived value of elite sports, sport spectating and sport participation. The variance explained for subjective well-being was 43% ( $R^2 = 0.43$ ). Although national pride had a negative effect on subjective well-being, the most relevant determinants of national pride were firstly sport participation ( $\beta = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by the existence of sport spectators (sport spectators and followers in the media) ( $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and then by the perceived value of elite sports ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## **5.1. National pride**

### **5.1.1. Perceived value of elite sports**

National pride as a set of positive feelings derived from certain specific national achievements was determined by the perceived value of elite sports with a direct, positive and significant effect with a relevant magnitude of 0.26 (H1:  $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result is highly relevant for four reasons:

First, in the case of Portugal, achievements in sports ( $M = 5.66$ ,  $SD = 1.421$ ) are the engine of national pride, second to its history ( $M = 5.87$ ,  $SD = 1.388$ ), which is very rich due to its association with the Portuguese discoveries (numerous territories and maritime routes discovered by the Portuguese as a result of their maritime exploration during the 15th and 16th centuries). These results are consistent with previous studies that have indicated the relevant positive role that sporting success plays in national pride (De Bosscher et al., 2008; Gassmann et al., 2020; Hallmann et al., 2013; Kavetsos, 2012; Meier & Mutz, 2016; Mower, 2012), especially in small countries (Elling et al., 2014; Evans & Kelley, 2002). Thus, in Portugal, with a small population and only limited investment in sports, the achievements in sports, though fragile (56th position in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games medals ranking) are a driving force in explaining the levels of general national pride.

The second reason is related to Portugal's sporting performance in recent years. In major international competitions, Portugal has exceeded expectations (68th and 67th position in the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympic Games, respectively; 4th and 1st place among 55 nations in the UEFA European Cup 2012 and 2016, respectively; 4th and 13th place in the FIFA World Cup 2014 and 2018, respectively). These are achievements that seem to find support in what is advocated by Kavetsos & Szymanski (2010) when the results obtained are better than expected.

The third reason can be supported by an idea advocated by van Hilvoorde et al. (2010) that the strength of this effect may vary depending on the importance of the event and the role of expectation narratives prior to the start of the event. This may be applicable since the sports results were obtained in the most important international sports competitions (Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Cup) and the narratives regarding the expected results were mostly transparent and conservative.

The fourth reason, from a theoretical perspective, may also find support in the interdisciplinary theory of collective pride (Sullivan, 2014) concerning heroic action studies, in

which identity (Olberg, 1995) plays a relevant role. The notion of Portuguese identity is very marked and relevant. Portugal is a nation of more than 800 years following reconquest and independence from Spain.

The research gaps found in the published literature have now been further clarified. The first gap was related to the lack of clear and unambiguous effects between sporting success and national pride (Elling et al., 2014; Haut et al., 2016; Kavetsos, 2012; Lechner, 2007; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010; van Osch et al., 2016; Wicker et al., 2012). Our research now shows, however, that the perceived value of elite sports acts on national pride with a direct, positive, and significant effect with a relevant magnitude of 0.26.

### **5.1.2. Sport spectating**

Sport spectating as a behaviour of individuals exerted a direct, positive, and significant effect on national pride, with a relevant magnitude of 0.55, (H3:  $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). That is, when sport spectating varies by one unit, national pride increases by 0.55 units.

Attending sports events, as well as following them via the media (TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers) has a very marked influence on feelings of national pride.

This result is interesting for two reasons:

The first is because there really needs to be a sufficient level of interest by individuals for the effect on national pride to manifest itself. This result confirms the assumption made for the UK government's goals for elite sport: 'improvement in success in international competition, particularly in the sports which matter most to the public' (DCMS/Strategy 2002, 12), i.e., unlike in sports that do not have public prominence or nurture the interest of the population.

The second reason may be related to the specific reality of Portugal. Soccer is the king sport and the population, mostly men, is a strong follower (not only in the stadiums, but also on TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers). The fans of the main clubs follow the Portuguese national team in the principal international competitions (FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Cup). This phenomenon is based on the idea that national pride depends on the importance of the event and on the narratives of expectation before the event starts (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010), which are regularly found in the comments made by coaches and officials of the Portuguese Football Federation. Being keen followers of sport, having good and detailed information about sports and attributing importance to sports achievements, all seem essential in raising loyal attendance and thus national pride.

In the case of our sample from Portugal, it is possible to highlight two elements that will have contributed to this goal. First, the Portuguese Football Federation, to raise the profile of national soccer games and contents, created its own TV channel to broadcast soccer content. Second, the Portuguese Football Federation campaign 'We are not 11, we are 11 million' celebrated national identity. This was used in the UEFA European Cup, in which Portugal became European champion, and won the UEFA marketing award 'Kiss Marketing Awards' (Diário de Notícias, 2016).

This result is consistent with previous studies on followers of sporting events (Lee & Maguire, 2009; Leng et al., 2015; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). That is, as opposed to non-spectators, 1) witnessing the nation's achievements in international competitions involving, a) watching the flag-raising ceremonies, b) listening to the national anthem, and c) enjoying the athletes' performance, is a determinant of national pride. Thus, the third research gap found is now better clarified, and our research has reduced the divergence between results found among spectators in person, those who follow the sport via the media (TV, radio, newspapers and Internet) and those who have no interest at all in sport; in relation to national pride (Bernache-Assollant et al., 2021; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Kersting, 2007; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Leng et al., 2014, 2015; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010), sport spectating acts with a direct, positive and significant effect with a relevant magnitude of 0.55.

### **5.1.3. Sport participation**

Sport participation as a behaviour of individuals was found to be a strong determinant of national pride and it exerted a direct, positive and significant effect with a relevant magnitude of 0.61 (H5:  $\beta = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). So, remarkably, when sport participation varies by one unit, national pride increases by 0.61 units.

Being a regular, weekly sports practitioner strongly promotes the development of feelings of national pride. In contrast, being sedentary does not favour the nurturing of feelings of national pride.

This result is consistent with prior studies which indicated that, of people who played sports (active in sports), 81% showed much more pride in their sports achievements than people who did not participate in sports (Elling et al., 2014); and about 58% of those who played sports in the week before the survey was carried out, felt proud of the Netherlands, compared to 53% of those who did not play sports (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010).

This result can be explained by the following: National pride involves a favourable evaluation of what the country has achieved and includes the admiration of someone who has made an achievement (Evan & Kelley, 2002). Being a regular athlete implies personal discipline and effort,

aspects which seem to be congruent with assessing the importance attributed to the sporting achievements of elite athletes, which also require personal self-determination, high levels of physical effort, and which demand high levels of personal discipline.

## **5.2. Subjective well-being**

### **5.2.1. Perceived value of elite sports**

The perceived value of elite sports was a determinant of subjective well-being, and exerted a direct, positive, and significant effect with a relevant magnitude of 0.33 (H2:  $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). That is, the more individuals perceived value in their country's sport, the higher the level at which they positively evaluated their lives. Perceived value of elite sports played a relevant role in determining subjective well-being, and this is very clear for the legitimation of both the conceptual elements and the empirical results.

Concerning conceptual elements, it justifies the so-called 'virtuous cycle' of sport, in which the success of elite sport is seen as an international prestige factor for the nation and a general feel-good factor for the population (Grix & Carmichael, 2012), a postulate that seems to validate the public policies of investment in elite sport.

Concerning empirical results, it seeks to address the little explored link between sporting success and subjective well-being (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). That is, it has been confirmed that the successes of athletes and national teams in major sporting events are associated with population well-being (Bernache-Assollant et al., 2021; Hallmann et al., 2013; Mutz, 2019; Silva et al., 2020; Wicker et al., 2012), including the idea advocated by Kavetsos & Szymanski (2010), that when national sports performances occur at a level above expectations, they tend to generate a higher level of subjective well-being. This seems to apply to Portugal, as a small country without a great tradition of international sporting performances. On the other hand, the results contradict two ideas: the first, that the effects are marginal and very limited (Elling et al., 2014; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010), which was not the case, since the magnitude of the effect was 0.33; and the second, that the effects of sporting success on subjective well-being are nil (Kavetsos, 2012; Pawlowski et al., 2014; van Osch et al., 2016).

Thus, the first research gap identified regarding the lack of clear and unequivocal effects between sporting success and subjective well-being (De Bosscher et al., 2008; Hallmann et al., 2013; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Mutz, 2019; Pawlowski et al., 2014; Silva et al., 2020), is now better

clarified, since our research shows that the perceived value of elite sports is a direct, positive, and significant determinant of subjective well-being.

### **5.2.2. Sport spectating**

Sport spectating both in person and via the media (TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers) exerted a direct, positive, and significant effect (H3:  $\beta = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) on subjective well-being. This is a relevant result expressed at a magnitude of 0.49, such that when sport spectating varies by one unit, subjective well-being increases by 0.49 units. The well-being of population members has already been considered as the key to creating and maintaining healthy people and productive societies (Diener et al., 1999), so this result is relevant for three reasons.

The first reason is that through the media followers have the opportunity to witness the nation's achievements involving 1) the flag-raising ceremonies, 2) listening to the national anthem (Leng et al., 2015; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010); and 3) admiring remarkable performances by elite athletes, such as Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, often considered the best player in the world (Ronaldo has won five Ballon d'Or awards and four European Golden Shoes, the most by any European player); and 4) the surprising success of Portugal, which, although a small country, has three national daily newspapers dedicated to sports, especially soccer, and six open signal TV channels in which soccer occupies much of the programming.

The second reason is because it surpasses the results previously obtained in the few studies that have addressed how passive media consumption of sporting events relates to subjective well-being (Mutz, 2019), especially the one regarding the verification of only a few incidences of experienced well-being (Elling et al., 2014). It further confirms the existence of a strong direct relationship (Inoue et al. 2017; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Kim & James, 2019; Pawlowski et al., 2014), helping to reduce the inconclusive character of the results between sport spectating and subjective well-being.

The third reason, from a theoretical point of view, relates to the influence on subjective well-being triggered by leisure, sport spectating and sport media viewing, which seems to be justified based on the assumption that leisure activities satisfy basic needs, e.g., the need for relatedness, aesthetic and mastery experiences and distinction (Sirgy et al., 2017), the satisfaction of which tend to raise subjective well-being.

A relevant contribution has also been provided in respect of the third research gap, concerning the divergence between results in relation to subjective well-being found between spectators in



person, those who follow the sport via the media (TV, radio, newspapers, and Internet) and those who have no interest at all in sport (Becchetti et al., 2008; Elling et al., 2014; Inoue et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2017; Kim & James, 2019; Mutz, 2019; Pawlowski et al., 2014). Our research shows that sport spectating acts on subjective well-being with a direct, positive, and significant effect with a relevant magnitude of 0.49.

### **5.2.3. Sport participation**

Sport participation exerted a direct, positive, and significant effect with a relevant magnitude of 0.54, (H3:  $\beta = 0.54$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) on subjective well-being. That is, the more individuals report a higher frequency of sport participation, the higher the levels of subjective well-being.

The gains for the health and physical, psychological, and social well-being of individuals seem obvious, as supported by the guidelines of the two following international institutions: 1) World Health Organisation - guidelines on physical activity on the path to well-being (World Health Organisation, 2020); and 2) European Union - EU Physical Activity Guidelines, Policy Actions in Support of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (European Commission, 2013).

We cannot, however, agree with the first part of the idea advocated by Testoni et al. (2018) that sport participation has little or no effect on evaluations of subjective well-being, but we do agree with the second part: that the effect comes indirectly, through the mediation of health and other outcomes that sport helps to promote (Testoni et al., 2018). As seems clear, what will increase subjective well-being will necessarily be the evaluation of the benefits felt by individuals resulting from regular sports participation, and this is very relevant.

In addition, the results obtained are relevant because they allow us to clarify divergent results (Panza et al., 2019; Wicker & Frick, 2017) that have previously been found and to confirm, regardless of the type of sport, the positive effect of sports participation on subjective well-being (Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Downward et al., 2018; Grunseit et al., 2018; Huang & Humphreys, 2012; Kim & James, 2019; Lechner, 2007; Pawlowski et al., 2014; Rasciute & Downward, 2010; Silva et al., 2020).

### **5.3. National pride**

General national pride, contrary to expectations, did not have a direct and positive effect on subjective well-being (H7:  $\beta = -.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). On the contrary, it exerted a significant negative direct effect, albeit with a reduced magnitude of 0.19.

A potential explanation can be advanced in that subjective well-being, being an individual global assessment, is influenced by multiple personal factors, which were not covered in our research, so there may be other factors that need to be included in a future more in-depth study.

The results do not confirm the studies of Hallmann et al. (2013), but instead, they found a positive effect between national pride and subjective well-being (Kavetsos, 2012; Onusic & Mendesda-Silva, 2015).

For this reason, the results do not seem clear: the assertion in the Hallmann et al. (2013) model that national pride and happiness (i.e., subjective well-being) have been shown to be independent, and the hypothesis that pride arising from international sporting success can directly contribute to subjective well-being, have not been confirmed (Elling et al., 2014).

## **6. LIMITATIONS**

As with any research, this study has a few limitations. One limitation was the sample size and the larger number of men, which may have influenced the results. In addition, studies have shown that socioeconomic factors can affect the results obtained, namely the levels of subjective well-being.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

This study has contributed to the emerging body of literature focused on the effects of sport consumption (i.e., sport participation, sport spectating and sport media viewing) on national pride and subjective well-being. Relevant contributions have been provided to untangle the discrepancies found in the literature. Results allow us to draw five major conclusions:

i) The global model designed included the key factors of sports consumption and showed relevant predictive capacity, both of national pride and subjective well-being.

ii) Citizens who assign a higher perceived value to elite sports in their country showed higher levels of general national pride.

iii) Sport spectating - both spectating in person and sport media viewing - was a strong determinant of national pride and of citizens' self-assessment of how satisfied they felt about their lives.

iv) The study provided evidence that sport participation has a very important positive impact on national pride, with the results showing another reason for the importance of citizens being physically active.

v) No evidence was found that higher levels of national pride directly affect subjective well-being.

The effects of national pride on subjective well-being remain contradictory and inconclusive. Therefore, future research could consider the inclusion of other factors with potential determinant or mediating effects, such as the tradition/popularity of a given sport in a country. A comparison could also be carried out of the effects of the global model designed for different sports, with different levels of tradition/popularity. To increase the explanation levels of the model, the indirect effects of sport spectating could be tested, and the effects of sports media viewing be evaluated in isolation. A longitudinal study could also be conducted, designed to assess the effects of sports achievements, before, during and after a given major sporting event.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS**

### **8.1. Theoretical Implications**

The results have three theoretical implications that need to be highlighted:

First, the results are consistent with previous studies and confirm the assertion of the Hallmann et al. (2013) model that national pride and happiness (i.e., subjective well-being) are indeed independent factors.

Secondly, because they significantly explain the variance of national pride, the factors associated with the sports consumption construct were found to be very appropriate, especially for countries considered small.

And thirdly, our results seem to legitimise governments' strong investment policies in elite sports, supported by the effect of the so-called 'virtuous cycle' (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). In addition to inspiring sport participation, this 'virtuous cycle' positively impacts the perception of a country's elite sports value, which subsequently leads to the development of national pride.

## 8.2. Managerial Implications

These results entail three main outcomes and are aimed at three targets: 1) sports policymakers, 2) managers of teams and elite athletes, and 3) media partners (TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers) of national teams.

The first implication is aimed at stimulating the interest by the population in the most important international sporting events in which the country's elite athletes participate. Through a conservative narrative and moderate objectives, the Chairperson of the national association/team should be cautious not to raise the expectations of citizens. These moderated actions, according to our results, may lead to a higher perceived value of elite sports that leads to the elevation of national pride.

The second implication is supported by the result that the perceived value of elite sports and sport spectating has a strong impact on national pride and subjective-well-being. The suggestion is to involve the media partners of the national association (at least on one of each medium - TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers). Actions to be taken are to produce and disseminate content that appeals to the development of national identification (national flag and anthem and endorsements of key athletes). Other actions may involve organising fan zones in the main cities of the country during the most important international sporting events to ensure a wider range of monitoring and enjoyment of the sporting performances of elite athletes.

The third recommendation is aimed at sports policymakers. The public policies of governments should be reinforced with structured investments in sport in two respects. In mass sport participation, the results of our study show important effects on national pride and subjective well-being, in contrast to that of sedentary individuals; further, investments in elite sports lead to relevant sporting achievements, which in turn lead to general national pride.

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**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

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