Systematic Review

Relevant Sport Management Knowledge, Competencies, and Skills: An Umbrella Review

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Abstract: The present umbrella review aimed to: (i) analyze review manuscripts on sport management knowledge/competencies/skills; (ii) propose a harmonized, evidence-based, competency framework for a comprehensive understanding of the intertwined relationships between knowledge, competencies, and skills in determining sport managers' expected working performance and need for training; and (iii) provide insights for a sound implementation of educational curricula. Based on the PRIO guidelines, inclusion criteria encompassed systematic and narrative literature peer-reviewed review manuscripts relevant to sport management knowledge/competencies/skills, published between 2012 and 2022 in English. The search was performed on three databases, resulting in twenty-two retained review manuscripts representing different research topics. From 277 recorded elements, 72 knowledge/competencies/skills items were extracted. Leadership skills, Finance and administration, Marketing, and Effective communication accounted for the highest representation. Based on the identified evidence, a sport management comprehensive framework was developed including: (1) Life-long learning; (2) Necessary knowledge; (3) What is needed to be done; (4) How things get done; (5) Modulating factors; (6) Transversality within the industry; and (7) Dynamic interaction and intertwined relations. In considering the research propositions and relative recommendations for curricula implementation and future research, the present findings could foster the debate for the sustainable growth of this research area.

Keywords: sport management; umbrella review; knowledge; competencies; skills; harmonized framework

1. Introduction

Sport is a large, fast-growing, and employment-intensive economic activity, fully settled into mainstream business and with well-established relationships with political, educational, and economic sectors [1,2]. Since its early stages as an academic discipline [2–4], sports management (SM) has needed to clearly define its foundational knowledge and to update programs for providing adequate business/administration-related knowledge, competencies, and skills (K/C/S) to sport managers and administrators [3–5]. Furthermore, the establishment of international SM bodies (e.g., NASSM, EASM, WASM, and COSMA), the global implementation of formal (e.g., higher education) and non-formal (e.g., vocational) educational paths, and the growing scholars' interest in SM-related research progressively legitimized SM as an autonomous academic discipline [2,3,6,7]. In this framework, there is a need to continue stimulating research, academic exchange, and collaborations between SM academic and industry stakeholders on dominant field-related trends to adjust academic and vocational training [8].

Recently, a growing body of research has focused on SM educational curricula, employability, sport managers' attributes, and organizational dynamics within sport organizations (SOs). This process has contributed to strengthening the characterization of the SM foundational knowledge, relevant K/C/S, roles and responsibilities in managing and leading SOs,

and teaching/learning methodologies to enhance the whole sector's professionalization, SM graduates' preparedness, and employees' performance [3,4,6,7,9–25]. However, several factors contribute to reinforcing the complexity of this peculiar labor market sector. First, the policy, non-profit, and other sectors are increasingly interested in the educational, health, recreational, and cultural dimensions of sports in society, which bridge the gaps of inequality by bonding different peoples, social classes, religions, nations, etc. [26–29]. Therefore, there is a need for a universal language to implement programs and actions meeting the needs of a wider population. Second, in being a powerful driver of irrational passions, emotions, and engagement, sport events attract billions of people worldwide and are unique platforms of convergent interest of several stakeholders (e.g., spectators, athletes, coaches, staff, clubs/associations, fans, managers, leaders, governing bodies, policy institutions, and the actors in the business and media sectors), becoming the perfect avenue for entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship of actors interested in gaining a competitive advantage through the sports environment [30–32]. Finally, profound differences between SOs in relation to their nature (e.g., public vs. private; non-profit vs. for-profit), size (e.g., governing bodies vs. local sport clubs), organizational structure (e.g., very structured/professionalized vs. less structured/professionalized), and goals (e.g., commercial and social) determine a huge variety of K/C/S related to a range of different tasks (e.g., very limited and/or specialized vs. diverse and/or less specialized and/or spreading across different organizational departments) within different contextual settings [9,11,33].

Effective SM higher educational programs should bridge the gap between industry demands and graduates' preparedness to prepare graduates for career development in terms of vertical progression and/or horizontal/transversal job mobility [21,34,35]. Thus, a continuous update of scientific evidence could foster SM sustainable growth and innovation of educational contents, delivery, and skills development strategies [14,25,36,37] in relation to different contexts [38,39] and historical contingency [3,40].

In Europe, the reform of higher education supported the establishment of a European academic framework [41]. Furthermore, an international consensus in relation to the main foundational knowledge included in the SM academic paths exists [3,4]. However, curricula and educational approaches vary considerably within, between, and among national contexts, and no specific competency framework and/or guidelines for competence-driven curricula exist [21]. Furthermore, industry demands that employees excel in a variety of C and S (e.g., soft skills, SS; and hard-technical skills, HS) when planning, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating activities and tasks. Therefore, to drive innovation in societal changing conditions and to align with international policies, there is a call for subsuming a theoretical-based approach in educating SM professionals [21,33,42,43]. Actually, a consistent body of research addressed specific K/C/S in SM education for entry, middle, and senior level managers [6,7,9,24]. Furthermore, the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations [44] and the International Standard Classification of Occupations [45] recognize SM occupational profiles, highlighting essential and optional K and S. However, fragmented and multifaceted information on relevant K/C/S emerged. Therefore, it is necessary to continue exploring this research area and to structure a comprehensive, evidence-based, and sustainable competency framework for sport managers.

To promote gender equality in SOs, the European Commission recently co-founded the New Miracle Project, which aims to identify relevant C and S education to empower female SM through a tailored training program [46]. Therefore, the purpose of the present umbrella review (UR) was three-fold: (i) to analyze the evidence on the major K/C/S within the SM-related systematic and narrative literature reviews; (ii) to structure a harmonized, evidence-based, K/C/S framework for a comprehensive understanding of the intertwined relationships between knowledge, competencies, and skills in determining sport managers' expected working performance and consequent need for training; and (iii) to provide insights for a sound implementation of educational curricula and future research directions to foster the debate in this exciting research area.

2. Materials and Methods

This work was conducted as a part of the Erasmus+ Sport Collaborative Partnership "Women—new leader's empowerment in sport and physical education industry—New Miracle" project, co-financed by the European Commission (Project number: 622391-EPP-1-2020-1-LT-SPO-SCP).

2.1. Protocol and Eligibility Criteria

The present study was based on a modified version of the Preferred Reporting Items for Overviews of systematic reviews (PRIO) guidelines [47]. Inclusion criteria for the studies encompassed: (i) a peer-reviewed systematic literature review (SLR) and narrative review (NR) of manuscripts; (ii) scientific contributions published in English in the last ten years (January 2012–December 2022); (iii) the presence of K/C/S listed within the full text, relevant in relation to the research objectives; and (iv) a moderate to strong methodological quality [48,49]. Exclusion criteria were: (i) primary research articles (identified and retained for other research purposes); (ii) not peer-reviewed publications (e.g., book chapters, book reviews, commentaries); (iii) a weak methodological quality [48,49]; and (iv) the absence of cited K/C/S.

2.2. Literature Search Process

The search string applied on three databases (i.e., Google Scholar, SPORTDiscus (EBSCO-host), and Scopus) included: (sport management) AND (competence OR competencies OR skill*), with the asterisk (*) allowing to retrieve similar root (i.e., skill* = skill and skills). Alert notifications after September 2022 until December 2022 (i.e., end of the data collection) were activated in all the included databases to ensure the inclusion of the most updated articles.

2.3. Selection of Studies and Data Extraction

Based on title, keywords, abstract, and full text screening, two researchers from the New Miracle Project Team independently evaluated the retrieved manuscripts, reporting reasons for exclusion. The opinion of a third researcher was required in case of disagreement on eligibility. Then, data extraction included author(s), year of publication, editorial source, geographical context, research setting, applied search range, total number of studies included in the reviews, and main findings including the listed K/C/S within the full text.

2.4. Assessment of the Methodological Quality

An adapted version of the Quality Assessment Tool for Reviews [48] was used to assess the methodological quality of the included SLRs, which proved a reliable appraisal evaluation in several research contexts [50,51]. Eight quality criteria questions were applied (Supplementary Material S1), with 1 pt. assigned to positive (e.g., "Yes") answers, and 0 pt. to negative (e.g., "No") or doubtful (e.g., "Can't tell") ones, respectively. Based on the scored quality values (range 0–8 pt.), each manuscript was labeled as weak (range: 0–3 pt), moderate (range: 4–6 pt), or strong (range: 7–8 pt). Only moderate and strong quality studies were retained in the final list to avoid the inclusion of SLRs with a weak methodological quality.

Developed as a brief critical appraisal tool for assessing the construct quality of non-systematic articles, the Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles (SANRA) [49] was applied to NR. This tool includes six items (Supplementary Material S1), to be rated from 0 pt (low standard) to 2 pt (high standard), with 1 pt as an intermediate score, and a maximal summative score of 12 pt. Papers accounting for 1–4 pt, 5–8 pt, and 9–12 pt were categorized as showing weak, moderate, and strong construct quality, respectively. A SANRA $\geq$ 5 pt threshold was applied to avoid the inclusion of NR showing a weak construct quality.

2.5. Data Analysis

Each included manuscript was critically analyzed to provide major information regarding research purposes and outcomes, also in relation to the present UR's specific research target (e.g., SM-relevant K/C/S). Extracted data were recorded in an Excel file for data processing, which included thematic analysis for clustering the collected K/C/S and descriptive statistics in relation to the frequency of occurrence (%) of each item.

3. Results

3.1. General Findings from the Umbrella Review

The literature search reported 1467 records. After removal of duplicates, title/keywords screening, and abstract evaluation, 135 papers were retained for further analysis, which excluded 91 primary research articles. From the remaining 48 manuscripts processed for full text evaluation, 26 articles were excluded due to: (i) not meeting the inclusion criteria ($n = 15$); (ii) out of scope/target ($n = 3$); (iii) not meeting quality assessment criteria ($n = 5$); and (iv) lack of relevant K/C/S ($n = 3$). The final list of included manuscripts ($n = 22$) included twelve SLRs and ten NRs (Figure 1 and Table 1) published in academic journals ranked from no to first quartile.
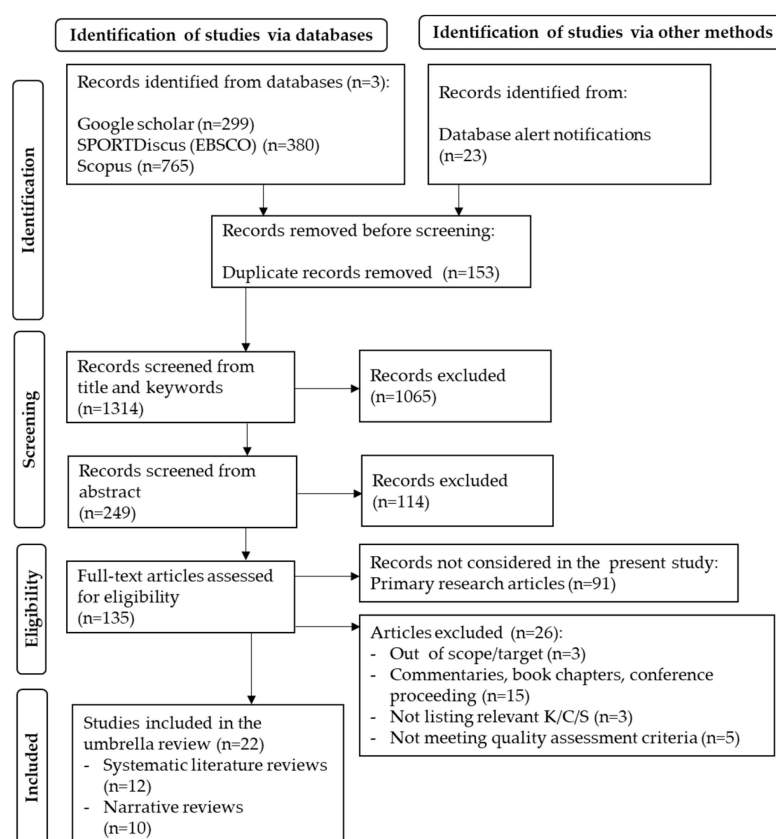
Figure 1. Flowchart of the umbrella review process.

Within the considered time frame, eight manuscripts were published after the year 2020, mostly in western countries (Europe: $n = 11$; North America: $n = 8$; Oceania: $n = 2$; Asia: $n = 1$). For the SLRs, the number of used databases ranged from 1 to 9, including studies ranging from 757 in the bibliometric study of Ciomaga [7] to 19 [52]. Conversely, the manuscripts included in the NRs ranged from 21 [53] to 169 [2].

Independently from the study typology, no contribution reached the highest quality (Table 1 and Supplementary Material S1), with only one SLR [31] showing a strong quality (7 pt), whereas eight NRs [3,25,54–58] presented a strong construct quality (range: 9–11 pt).

Regarding the identified research purposes and outcomes of the included manuscripts, major information is reported in Table 2.

Table 1. List of the included manuscripts in the present umbrella review, according to the publication year for SLRs and NRs. The codes refer to the citation order in the text.

Code	Authors	Review Type	Country	Journal Abbreviation	Journal Q	Papers Included	Databases (*n*)	QS	QL
[7]	Ciomaga, 2013	SLR	Canada	*ESMQ*	1	757	2, and 3 specific journals	6	Moderate
[28]	Bjärsholm, 2017	SLR	Sweden	*JSM*	1	33	13	6	Moderate
[6]	Miragaia and Soares, 2017	SLR	Portugal	*JoHLSTE*	2	98	2, and 4 specific journals	6	Moderate
[30]	Jalonen et al., 2018	SLR	Finland	*OJBM*	0	74	4	4	Moderate
[59]	Megheirkouni, 2018	SLR	United Kingdom	*Choregia*	0	44	4, and 4 specific journals	5	Moderate
[60]	Evans and Pfister, 2021	SLR	Denmark	*Int. Rev. Sport Sociol.*	1	154	1 (main) + 3 (informal search)	5	Moderate
[9]	Vllasaj, 2021	SLR	Hungary	*OJBM*	1	79	4	6	Moderate
[10]	Yarmohammadi-Monfared et al., 2021	SLR	Iran	*JBSO*	0	54	9	4	Moderate
[52]	Costa and Miragaia, 2022	SLR	Portugal	*Gend. Manag.*	1	19	2	6	Moderate
[29]	Fechner et al., 2022	SLR	Australia	*ESMQ*	1	42	6 (main) + 1 (forward search)	4	Moderate
[31]	Lara-Bocanegra et al., 2022	SLR	Spain	*Int. J. Sports Mark.*	2	49	6	7	Strong
[11]	Santos et al., 2022	SLR	Portugal	*SPORT TK*	4	65	4	5	Moderate
[54]	Stylianos, 2013	NR	Greece	*Am. J. Sports Sci*	0	137		9	Strong
[3]	Seifried, 2014	NR	United States	*J. Manag. Hist.*	1	98		10	Strong
[55]	Demir and Söderman, 2015	NR	Sweden	*ESMQ*	1	153		11	Strong
[56]	Peachey et al., 2015	NR	United States	*JSM*	1	44		11	Strong
[53]	Pfleegor and Seifried, 2015	NR	United States	*J. Contemp. Athl.*	0	21		6	Moderate
[61]	Brandon-Lai et al., 2016	NR	United States	*JASM*	0	47		7	Moderate
[57]	Magnusen and Perrewé, 2016	NR	United States	*Sport Manag. Educ.*	3	76		10	Strong
[25]	de Schepper and Sotiriadou, 2018	NR	Australia	*Ann. Leis. Res*	1	105		11	Strong
[58]	Robinson et al., 2018	NR	United States	*Sport Manag. Educ.*	3	97		10	Strong
[2]	Cunningham et al., 2021	NR	United States	*Kinesiol. Rev.*	2	169		11	Strong

Note: Journal Q = journal quartile, assessed using the Scimago journal rank portal. QS = Quality Score; QL = Quality label.

Table 2. Purpose, target, and main outcomes of the included manuscripts.

Code	Purpose	Target	Main Outcomes
[7]	To determine historical variations of main themes and trends in the SM literature.	SM research area	The focus of the SM research expanded beyond physical education and intercollegiate athletic programs, with an increased interest in themes that resonate with a commercial logic. The central trends reflect SM's search for legitimacy, to define itself in relation to its reference disciplines.
[28]	To outline the scope, focus, theoretical position, and the utilization of the concept of social entrepreneurship in the current body of peer-reviewed research within the field of sport and social entrepreneurship.	Business and sport (social entrepreneurship)	Existing research is almost exclusively qualitative, often based on case studies, mostly carried out in other scientific disciplines, with sport playing a minor role. The articles focus on the processes of social entrepreneurship, but the manner in which the concept of social entrepreneurship is utilized differs between articles and is seldom defined. Sport and social entrepreneurship represent an emerging research field, and the definition and understanding of several key concepts is open to interpretation and lack consensus.
[6]	To identify and understand the relationship between higher education in SM and the professional market field, particularly with respect to undergraduate and master's degrees.	SM education	The research field showed a relevant development over the past 30 years. A prevalence of contributions from the United States emerged, probably due to the NASSM facilitating the synergy among stakeholders from the academic, scientific, and professional environments. The quality of SM programs and courses, as well as gender issues in higher education and employability, also emerged as crucial areas. Further research is needed in relation to: Curriculum and Knowledge; Internship, Experiential Learning, and Service Learning; Employability; Pedagogy; Gender; Technology and e-Learning; Globalization and Internationalization; and Accreditation Process and Quality. The formative experience of the students should be adjusted, and the application of pedagogical approaches needs to be consistent with new contemporary dynamics. SM education should be further developed, and strategies among international stakeholders should be established to ensure a sustainable education in this field.
[30]	To investigate the interaction of business and sport from a value-creation perspective.	Business and sport	Value creation is realized in the nexus of sport and business, not between sport and business. Value co-creation refers to the process in which value is co-created in interactions amongst various actors through the integration of resources. Although the nature of sport is very emotional, in the sport–business nexus, sport cannot work as an emotional value provider without the firm, which acts as an emotional value beneficiary. The service-dominant logic of value co-creation is an appropriate framework for understanding value co-creation. Finally, the interdependent nature of economic, functional, emotional, and symbolic values in value co-creation has been highlighted.
[59]	To review the characteristics of mixed methods designs in sport leadership research. Leadership theories and approaches have been analyzed to understand how mixed methods designs have been used and how they could be used in future research.	Leadership in sport	The findings showed that mixed methods design in sport leadership is neglected. Effective sport leadership may occur by investigating leadership theories/approaches, using mixed methods designs in sport contexts to understand the effective application of particular theories/approaches.
[60]	Gender inequity in sport organization boards, particularly in decision-making positions (EU-funded project 'SWinG').	Gender (governance of SOs)	A global consensus emerged on women continuing to be under-represented in leadership positions. Patriarchal selection practices and organizational cultures reinforce this inequity, although awareness of gender issues has increased. While gender equity policies exist, actions to pursue gender equity are more limited. Patriarchal language, gendered stereotypes, and person-profiling still persist, resulting in specific emotional and practical challenges for women in sports leadership positions. A prevalence of research carried out in the liberal 'Western' society also emerged. There is a need to further explore practicable solutions and guidance on organizational culture change, election procedures, laws and quotas, and women's experiences of inequity.

Table 2. *Cont.*

Code	Purpose	Target	Main Outcomes
[9]	To examine the literature on the management of non-profit sports organizations.	SOs (non-profit)	The majority of the literature focused on organizational capacity (performance effectiveness, governance and management approaches and strategies), human resources (boards, membership, volunteerism), leadership, partnerships, and organizational hybridity. Further cross-disciplinary research is recommended.
[10]	To review and explain the importance of establishing a meritocracy system in sports organizations.	SOs (personnel performance)	A lack of meritocracy culture and an emphasis on centralism, centralized management, bureaucracy, instability in managerial careers, reliance on quantity and short-term goals, traditional management practices, indifference to research, and indifference to managers' performance have been identified. Managers of SOs must have competencies such as knowledge of business rules and processes, knowledge of sports rules, supervision and management of human resources, communication skills and public relations, technology and technical skills in the field of sports, personal and ethical characteristics, economy and finance leadership and management skills, intelligence and political awareness. By managing qualified people, public trust in organizations can be increased and some of the conflicts that sometimes plague SOs can be reduced.
[52]	To analyze how female entrepreneurship in the context of sports organizations has been studied in the scientific community.	Gender (entrepreneurship in sport)	Education and entrepreneurship, sports and entrepreneurial skills development, barriers to entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurship from a gender perspective have been identified as main thematic clusters. Quantitative methodological approaches were found to be prevalent. Several barriers to female entrepreneurship have been highlighted. However, physical activity and sports have been found to aid the development of skills and abilities that may be fundamental to entrepreneurial initiatives. Formation in the context of higher education has also been identified as a fundamental tool for stimulating female entrepreneurship.
[29]	To synthesize the existing body of knowledge on charity sport events (CSEs) sponsorship.	Sponsoring (charity sport events, CSEs)	A high proportion of the existing research has examined CSE sponsorship programs in the United States. The majority of the studies collected cross-sectional data through questionnaires to investigate the outcomes of CSE sponsorship, which calls for future longitudinal research. Event participation segmentation has been recommended to assist in creating meaningful leverage initiatives. Furthermore, event sponsors are encouraged to share their underlying motivation to support the CSE and invite employees to volunteer at the event. Finally, future research combining physiological and traditional methods is encouraged to better predict participants' purchase behaviour.
[31]	To analyze the state of the art on entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in sport, determining the latest study trends and detecting possible research niches.	Business and sport (entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in sport)	Spain was found to be the most productive country in this field. Entrepreneurship in sport received more attention in the literature than intrapreneurship, including different subthemes: precursors of entrepreneurship; intention/orientation of entrepreneurship; different perspectives of entrepreneurship in sport; and social entrepreneurship in sport. Intrapreneurship in sport is a less developed thematic block, which calls for future research in sport organization settings. A lack of research on precursors/antecedents of entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial behaviour, especially in relation to innovation, the political perspective, and formulation of training programs, has been also highlighted.
[11]	To map the literature on sport managers' competencies and tasks.	Sport managers' competency profile and major tasks	Leadership, integrity, allocation of resources, delegation of authority, motivation of employees, human resources management, having specific knowledge, and creative thinking were found to be the most relevant competencies, used while performing tasks such as decision making, problem solving, communication, planning, or evaluating. Current sport managers are, usually, in their thirties or forties, with an experience of less than ten years. They lack specific education in SM, which is an aspect to improve in the future, along with more professionalization, since many of them are still working as volunteers.

Table 2. *Cont.*

Code	Purpose	Target	Main Outcomes
[54]	Depending on job performance definition and measurement on various factors that should be scientifically encoded rather than being based on an arbitrary or informal praxis, the review examined the importance of a valid and reliable human resources assessment to enhance organizations' prosperity competitiveness, effectiveness, and strategic planning.	SOs (personnel performance)	Evaluation contributes to improved administration and the normal operation of an organization as capable, highly trained, and skilled personnel constitute a necessity for an organization. The evaluation of human resources is not a luxury for an organization, but a necessity which should be incorporated as an integral part of any organization's culture. It should not be treated by companies as a cost to be avoided, but as an opportunity to invest in people with the ultimate goal of an organization's prosperity.
[3]	To explore the development of the NASSM and to map the foundation of the field of SM; to track the early beginnings of SM and present sport as a viable area for business and management historians to conduct their research and discuss theory.	SM research area	"History" and historians directly impacted the field of SM by helping to establish NASSM, the Journal of SM, and graduate study programs, in addition to fashioning the first field accreditation standards and seminal textbooks needed to educate SM student. Over time, SM scholars have moved away from a historical base towards true quantitative preferences, which has helped the field gain some respectability. The re-utilization of historical methods and/or perspectives can help serve the future of SM and business/management history research toward the study of emerging topics.
[55]	To selectively review the literature on sport sponsoring, linking it to the basic tenets of the resource-based view, and conceptualize this literature into a framework for strategic sponsoring in professional sport.	Sponsoring (professional sport)	Three sponsorship strategies have been identified (sponsorship as investment, relation, and animation), each containing specific types of sponsorship activities (philanthropic, brand, alliance, dealmaker, activation, and collective sponsoring). To better understand how to identify strategic resources and capabilities that generate or help build sustained competitive advantage and how such resources can be changed and altered, a framework was proposed. A theoretically rigorous way of identifying the locus and consequences of strategic resources across multiple levels of analysis (individual, organizational, network, and event), a set of six sponsoring activities as units of analysis for these various levels, and how these units of analysis have consequences for the acquisition, development, and retention of strategic resources at these levels, have been addressed.
[56]	To provide a comprehensive synthesis of the SM leadership literature to outline what has been learned, and to articulate a preliminary conceptual model capturing how leadership operates in SM.	Leadership in sport	A multi-level conceptual model was proposed, incorporating individual-level antecedents, moral identity, lived experience, and sport participation as factors influencing the leadership process. The model also highlighted that part of the leadership process includes several differentiating factors influencing leadership at the organizational/collective level (fans and alumni, governance structure, organizational culture, and stereotypes), at the group/team level (coaches and athletes), and at the individual level (the experience of the leader). The leadership process then leads to the multi-level consequences or outcomes of leadership. The SM discipline has grown in its legitimacy and scholarship from diverse angles and in a variety of contexts. However, future research is needed to explore the uniqueness of leadership in the SM.
[53]	To present the main features of three popularly followed sport-based ethical decision-making models to foster the moral education of intercollegiate sport managers and administrators.	Ethics	Unethical conduct has steadily increased. Thus, the consideration of practical ethical decision-making models is a critical first step towards improving the ethical awareness and maturity of intercollegiate sport managers and administrators. A higher level of ethical maturity might guide more effective and efficient decisions concerning ethical dilemmas. Each model provides an effective base to improve ethical decision-making efficiency and effectiveness; however, no ethical decision-making model has the ability to produce a perfect outcome for every situation or dilemma.

Table 2. *Cont.*

Code	Purpose	Target	Main Outcomes
[61]	To propose a conceptual model that allows the effectiveness of a SM internship to be evaluated according to its effect on the political skill of interns.	SM education	Understanding the internship as one crucial component of the SM curricula, a comprehensive conceptual model linking SM students' developmental experiences and internship quality to the development of political skill, and three secondary outcomes (i.e., domain-specific self-efficacy, sport industry identification, and future employment intentions) have been proposed. The political skill construct is excellently placed to encapsulate the type of development that internships purport to deliver. Through the development of their social astuteness, networking ability, apparent sincerity, and interpersonal influence, students are equipped to be successful in their prospective careers.
[57]	Given the salience of social effectiveness to leadership and the need for more complete investigations of the manner by which leaders engage in effective leadership behaviours, the review critically examined social effectiveness as a means to successful sport leadership and proposed specific pedagogical practices for SM educators.	Leadership and SM education	Even though a universally accepted understanding of what constitutes a prototypical effective leader in sport does not exist, a reasonable level of agreement is present among management scholars that effective leadership in general requires strong persuasive skills and the ability to be perceived by others as authentic. Effective leadership also requires situational and social adaptability, and the capacity to initiate and engage in meaningful interpersonal social exchanges, work within an intricate set of stakeholder relationships, and build coalitions. Social effectiveness represents a means to successful leadership; thus, it should be included in SM education through adequate pedagogical practices.
[25]	To outline potential reasons why there is disconnect between the skills employers want in the sport industry and the skills that SM programs equip graduates with.	SM education	Critical reflection in tertiary SM education is individually oriented, and neglects the social dimensions and other contextual aspects of the sport industry. Thus, an operationalization of critical reflection into three individual (experimentation, asking for feedback, and career awareness) and three social (challenging group-think, openness about mistakes, and sharing ideas) dimensions has been proposed. Suggestions for further research and a higher education policy direction that combines formal and informal learning in enhancing the social aspects of critical reflection in SM curricula have been provided.
[58]	To describe the origin and conceptualization of servant leadership and summarize its positive outcomes; to propose a model for understanding servant leadership attributes and dynamics; to provide recommendations for SM educators.	Leadership and SM education.	Although a single-best leadership style for a sport organization has yet to be determined, the servant leadership style has the potential to yield positive results. Servant leadership is an approach to leading that is motivated by a core altruistic calling, characterized by enduring central attributes of genuine caring, humility, and empathy, and inclusive of a range of contextually appropriate behaviours that benefit others. Servant leadership holds great promise for research and innovative practice in SOs, calling for the implementation of SM curricula.
[2]	To provide an overview of SM and the development of the field, summarizing events related to educational advances and professional societies, and highlighting theoretical advances and major research trends.	SM research area	The field of SM, both as a professional industry and an academic discipline, has developed into a bourgeoning domain, and has drifted substantially from its roots in physical education. Degree programs in SM—from bachelor's degrees to doctoral degrees—are offered worldwide, with an increasing trend aligned to the industry strength and to the need for continuing to implement the management of sport systems. As an emerging trend, sport for development resulted in numerous organizations and associations using sport as a mechanism to attain various social and humanitarian missions in all areas of the world.

3.2. Critical Synthesis from a SM K/C/S Perspective

The major thematic topics found were as follows: SM as a research area [2,3,7], education [6,25,61], leadership [56–59], SOs dynamics [9,10,54], business and entrepreneurship in sport [28,30,31], sponsorships [29,55], gender-related issues [52,60], ethical issues in SM [53], and the sport managers' competency and task profile [11]. Only one study perfectly met the specific purpose of this UR [11]. Because sport managers need to be proficient in a variety of K/C/S, the selected manuscripts addressed different research areas, specific aspects and/or tasks and/or responsibilities in the SM field, and general, specific, and

transversal K/C/S. The extracted K/C/S items for each contribution are reported in the Supplementary Material S3.

Regarding the manuscripts focusing on SM as a research topic, the bibliometric study of Ciomaga [7] showed the relevant increase in scholars' interest in this area, reflecting the progressive search for its legitimacy, and highlighting a growing emphasis on themes that resonate with a commercial logic. In light of the shift towards quantitative research methodologies to enhance the SM scientific rigor and the academic position between other disciplines, the importance of framing the historical development and future growth of SM has been advocated [3]. Furthermore, a comprehensive picture of the SM developmental phases and emerging trends [2] presented a growing focus on the understanding of SOs dynamics and operations through social sciences theories, which produced valuable insights to enhance the management of sport at all levels. As an academic field, SM was found to be fully established and grounded in its foundations, and projected towards further maturation, expansion, and progress, especially given the growing importance of sport as a mechanism to attain various social and humanitarian goals.

For future implementation and research areas on SM education, studies [6,25,61] addressed educational needs, characteristics of academic programs and course design, accreditations, internships/experiential learning, student's employability, and major C and S. In reconfirming the relevance of SM-related foundational BK, the crucial role of C and S for the implementation of different tasks and activities in SOs emerged. To nurture the student's skills, pedagogical approaches should consider learning and internship experiences adjusted to the contemporary global dynamics of the industry demands [61]. Specifically, higher educational institutions should combine formal and informal learning methodologies and integrate theoretical learning with activities designed to stimulate the social dimension of students' critical reflection skills [25].

Leadership and its related skills in sports settings have been investigated in relation to a myriad of styles and behaviors and their related outcomes at individual, dyadic, group, and organizational levels, in both on-the-field (e.g., athletic team) and off-the-field (e.g., management of the SO itself) settings [56]. Four selected studies addressed this topic from an historical/conceptual [56,58], methodological [59], social [57], and educational perspective. In portraying a comprehensive picture of different leadership styles and related research approaches, a lack of mixed methods research designs in this area emerged [59]. To enable a greater understanding of the leadership in the SM field, different leadership styles and modulators have been framed for developing a conceptual model [56]. Furthermore, the crucial role of social effectiveness and skills in sport leaders has been emphasized when considering the social dimension of leadership [57]. Based on the positive outcomes of a centered leading approach motivated by a core altruistic calling and genuine empathy that benefit others, the servant leadership style has been presented as a conceptual model in the field of sport (e.g., the Three-Sphere Model), and teaching activities to educate SM students as future servant leaders have been proposed [58]. In this framework, SM education should consider the implementation of educational curricula with the integration of activities designed to stimulate leadership and political skills to better prepare future leaders.

Leadership research also underpins contextual, cultural, and situational domains, such as ethical issues and gender equality in sport [52,53,60]. Building on the growing ethical misconducts within intercollegiate sports, the need to raise the awareness of sport managers and administrators towards the adoption of ethical decision-making processes has been deemed crucial to sustain their maturity and moral growth, and to guide them towards more effective and efficient decisions concerning ethical dilemmas [53]. Regarding the underrepresentation of women as SOs' executives due to persistent patriarchal selection practices, gendered language, stereotypes, and organizational cultures reinforcing inequity, the literature on gender-related issues has been critically examined [60]. In this framework, women should be supported in developing outstanding C and S related to the effective management of SOs and entrepreneurship to meet the (extra) challenges of this male-

hegemonic labor market sector, which is resilient to change, despite the increase in gender equality policies and concrete actions over the last decades [52,60].

Three studies specifically addressed SOs, particularly as non-profit bodies [9], in relation to the establishment of a meritocracy system [10], and the systematic adoption of personnel appraisal tools [54]. In exploring the literature on the management of non-profit SOs, the relevance of several subtopics emerged regarding organizational capacity, human resources, board and governance strategies, and inter-organizational partnerships, which urge managers and leaders to develop appropriate attributes for enhancing tasks and responsibility management [9]. To promote excellence in managing in a long-term perspective, to avoid corruption and misconduct, and to motivate employees to engage in life-long learning to ameliorate their professional capacities and prospective position, SOs are recommended to establish a meritocracy system for hiring, train good practices based on managers' actual competencies [10], and systematically evaluate the employees' performance through valid and reliable tools [54].

Business and entrepreneurship in sport represents another area of converging interests from different actors involved in the process of creating, delivering, and promoting products, with companies consistently investing in elite athletes, top teams, and sports events [28,30,31]. From a value-creation perspective, different actors participating in sports play a role as both value creators and value beneficiaries in this complex context, with sports managers being essential in nurturing the interaction between sport and business [30]. In considering that both for-profit and non-profit SOs share a common interest in value creation to ensure their financial future, sport managers should show special K/C/S in planning and implementing business plans in and through sport perspectives [30]. Aside its financial dimension, sport also plays a crucial role in the promotion of social values. As an emerging interdisciplinary research field in a time of societal change, social entrepreneurship in sport represents a relatively new concept influencing organizations within all sectors of society, particularly the non-profit ones [28]. To develop and implement innovative social-business plans, especially when reacting to diminished governmental budgets and excessive dependence on public funding, managers need to be proficient in a range of C and S, and have appropriate knowledge and awareness of differences existing between social entrepreneurship and other features, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and philanthropy [28]. Although a sharp increase in research in this area has been reported, the role of sport has been found to be limited. Therefore, it is crucial to foster the research regarding the precursors and contextual variables leading innovative behaviors, and to implement specific training programs on entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship for SM professionals [28,31].

Another area of critical attention pertains to sport sponsorships, which registered a progressive growth in expenditure attracting high business investments in major small-scale European events [29,55]. Because sponsoring is a strategic lever in professional sport, managers need competence and professionalization in three main strategies (i.e., sponsorship as investment, relation, and animation) to develop specific sponsoring activities (e.g., philanthropic, brand, alliance, dealmaker, activation, and collective sponsoring), which determine relevant consequences for the acquisition, development, and retention of strategic resources across individual, organizational, network, and event levels [55]. Aside from the role of sponsorship in elite sports, charity sport events (CSEs) have also experienced continuous growth, attracting the interest of scholars from the marketing, sport and event management, and psychology disciplines on the social value of sport and its role in the implementation of companies' CSR strategies and non-profit areas [29]. To mindfully design CSE sponsorship programs, sport managers should be equipped with adequate K/C/S to establish effective, sustainable, and long-term relationship with sponsors, taking into consideration several crucial aspects such as the effective collaboration between managers and sponsor representatives, the event sponsor fit, the long-term perspective in establishing cooperation and agreements, the development of meaningful leverage initia-

tives to facilitate the sponsor-attendees engagement, and event participants' segmentation based on appropriate criteria [29].

Finally, only one study was specifically focused on framing sport managers' competency and task profile, reporting general demographic (i.e., predominantly men in their thirties and forties, with less than ten years of experience in their actual job) and educational characteristics (i.e., mostly the tertiary education level without specific academic education in SM) of sport managers [11]. In considering the lack of professionalization and proficiency in S and C relevant to organizational performance, to accomplish important and time-consuming tasks the need to better educate sport managers in a wide range of K/C/S emerged (e.g., leadership, integrity, specific knowledge, resource allocation, authorities' delegation, employees' motivation, and innovative thinking) [11].

3.3. Analysis of Extracted K/C/S

A total of 277 recorded elements emerged from the full text analysis (Supplementary Material S2), labeled into a final list of 72 individual thematic items representing common themes. Seven main categories have been applied to cluster each item:: (1) Background knowledge (BK), including SM theoretical foundations acquired through formal academic degrees and/or certified SM qualifications (i.e., non-formal education); (2) Competencies (C), which is "the ability to meet complex demands successfully through the mobilization of mental prerequisites. Each competence is structured around a demand and corresponds to a combination of interrelated cognitive and practical skills, knowledge, motivation, values and ethics, attitudes, emotions, and other social and behavioral components that together can be mobilized for effective action in a particular context" [62]; (3) General Experience (GE), acquired through personal and/or work experiences in the sport sector; (4) Hard Skills (HS) relevant to employee productivity and efficiency, encompassing technical skills attained through formal, non-formal, and informal education; (5) Personal traits/attributes (PT/A), relatively stable over time and influencing behavior and action in the workplace; (6) Soft Skills (SS), representing non-technical skills pertain inter- or intra-personal dimensions, requested for an array of tasks and activities [63].

Table 3 reports major findings regarding K/C/S data extraction. A frequency occurrence ≥30% was registered for Leadership skills (64%), Finance and administration (55%), Marketing (55%), and Effective interpersonal communication (internal/external) skills (50%); Human resources, Business and entrepreneurship, and Cross-cultural competence (41%), Strategic management (36%), Planning/organization/coordination skills (36%), and Social skills/People skills (36%), Networking (32%), and CSR (32%) were also strongly represented. Another consistent pool of items represented 27% (e.g., Legal and sport policy, Managerial knowledge/experience, Sport-specific knowledge/experience, Communication skills (written/oral), Technological/digital/social media skills, Political skills, Stakeholders management) and 23% (e.g., Sport management education, qualifications, Analytic/evaluation/control skills, Decision Making skills, Sponsorship management, Tasks and resources management, Motivation/Enthusiasm/Passion, Creativity and innovation skills, Ethical commitment and behavior/integrity, Problem solving skills, Teamwork) of the included studies, respectively. Seventeen items accounted for between 18% and 9% of frequency of occurrence, whereas the remaining twenty-six items presented a lower representation.

Table 3. Frequency of occurrence of the identified K/C/S within the included manuscripts.

Cluster	Item	Fr. of Occ. (%) §
SS	Leadership skills	64
BK	Finance and administration	55
BK	Marketing	55
SS	Effective interpersonal communication skills (internal/external)	50
BK	Human resources	41

Table 3. *Cont.*

Cluster	Item	Fr. of Occ. (%) [§]
GE	Business and entrepreneurship attitude	41
C	Cross-cultural competence	41
BK	Strategic management and change management	41
C	Planning/organization/coordination skills	36
SS	Social skills/People skills	36
SS	Networking	32
BK	Corporate social responsibility (CSR)	32
BK	Legal and sport policy	27
GE	Managerial knowledge/experience	27
GE	Sport-specific knowledge/experience	27
HS	Communication skills (written/oral)	27
HS	Technological/digital/social media skills	27
SS	Political skills	27
C	Stakeholders management	27
BK	Sport management education, qualifications	23
C	Analytic/evaluation/control skills	23
C	Decision Making skills	23
C	Sponsorship management	23
C	Tasks and resources management	23
PT/A	Motivation/Enthusiasm/Passion	23
SS	Creativity and innovation skills	23
SS	Ethical commitment and behaviour/integrity	23
SS	Problem solving skills	23
SS	Teamwork	23
BK	Event management	18
C	Risk management	18
C	Facility/operations management	14
C	Goal orientation-setting	14
GE	General work-related experience	14
PT/A	Personal attributes	14
SS	Conflict management skills	14
SS	Critical Thinking skills	14
C	Emotional and interpersonal intelligence skills	9
C	Knowledge transfer to practice	9
C	Practical intelligence skills	9
HS	Information management/statistics	9
PT/A	Initiative/proactivity	9
PT/A	Learning (skills and will)	9
SS	Meetings management	9
SS	Personal management	9
SS	Respect of hierarchies, role boundaries, and responsibilities	9

Other attributes, including items receiving only 1 citation		**Cumulative (*n*)**
SS	Ability to deal with pressure/stress	**26**
SS	Accountability	BK = 2
SS	Adaptability/flexibility skills	C = 4
SS	Appropriate working behaviour/professionalism skills	HS = 3
SS	Career awareness and planning skills	PT/A = 4
SS	Constant availability	SS = 13
SS	Cultural and social awareness	
SS	Delegation skills	
HS	Foreign languages	
C	Fundraising and grant writing	
PT/A	Maturity	
SS	Negotiation skills	

Table 3. *Cont.*

Cluster	Item	Fr. of Occ. (%) §
HS	Project management	
SS	Relatability	
PT/A	Resilience/perseverance	
SS	Responsibility	
HS	Safety/security/health management	
PT/A	Self-confidence	
C	Social judgment skills	
PT/A	Social self-efficacy	
BK	Sport management history	
BK	Sport philosophy	
SS	Time management skills	
C	Transfer skills	
C	Volunteer management	
SS	Working autonomy skills	

Note: Total recorded items (*n* = 277). Fr. of Occ.= Frequency of occurrence (%); § = the Frequency of occurrence was calculated based on the number of recorded items with respect to the included manuscripts (*n* = 22). Clusters: BK= Background knowledge; C = Competence; GE = General experience; HS= Hard skills; PT/A= Personal traits/attributes; SS = Soft skills.

Among the top most cited K/C/S ($\geq$25%, *n* = 19 items), BK was the most cited cluster (*n* = 6 items), with Finance and administration, Marketing, Human resources, Strategic management and change management, Corporate social responsibility (CSR), and Legal and sport policy considered a crucial theoretical foundation for SM. SS was the second most relevant cluster (*n* = 5 items), with Leadership skills, Effective interpersonal communication skills (internal/external), Social skills/People skills, Networking, and Political skills considered extremely relevant features in this labor market sector. A lower impact emerged for the other clusters (C = 3 items: Cross-cultural competence, Planning/organization/coordination skills, Stakeholders management; GE = 3 items: Managerial, Sport-specific, and Business and entrepreneurship experience; HS = 2 items: Communication skills (written/oral), Technological/digital/social media skills). Furthermore, no PT/A was considered a fundamental requisite in SM.

3.4. Harmonized Competency Framework

Based on the main findings presented in the included manuscripts and the K/C/S data extracted in relation to their cluster and relevance (items receiving higher frequency of occurrence are presented first, and in italic font), a K/C/S framework for SM was developed to harmonize results deriving from different research areas (Figure 2). In support of this framework, several research propositions have been formulated with relative recommendations for both SM curricula implementation (SM-CI) and future research (FR).

Proposition 1: *SM education should be a life-long learning process.*

Sport managers operating in different contexts and at different levels (e.g., entry, middle, senior) should be encouraged to foster their education in relation to their different training needs, career stage, and situational and/or contextual contingency (e.g., micro level: individual; meso level: organizational; macro level: national context; global level: international context).

SM-CI: integration of different types of learning (e.g., formal, non-formal, and informal); provision of both theoretical and practical learning; adapted pedagogical approaches; internationalization of educational pathways.

FR: harmonization of different learning/teaching approaches within SM curricula; sport managers training needs in relation to their operational context and managerial level.
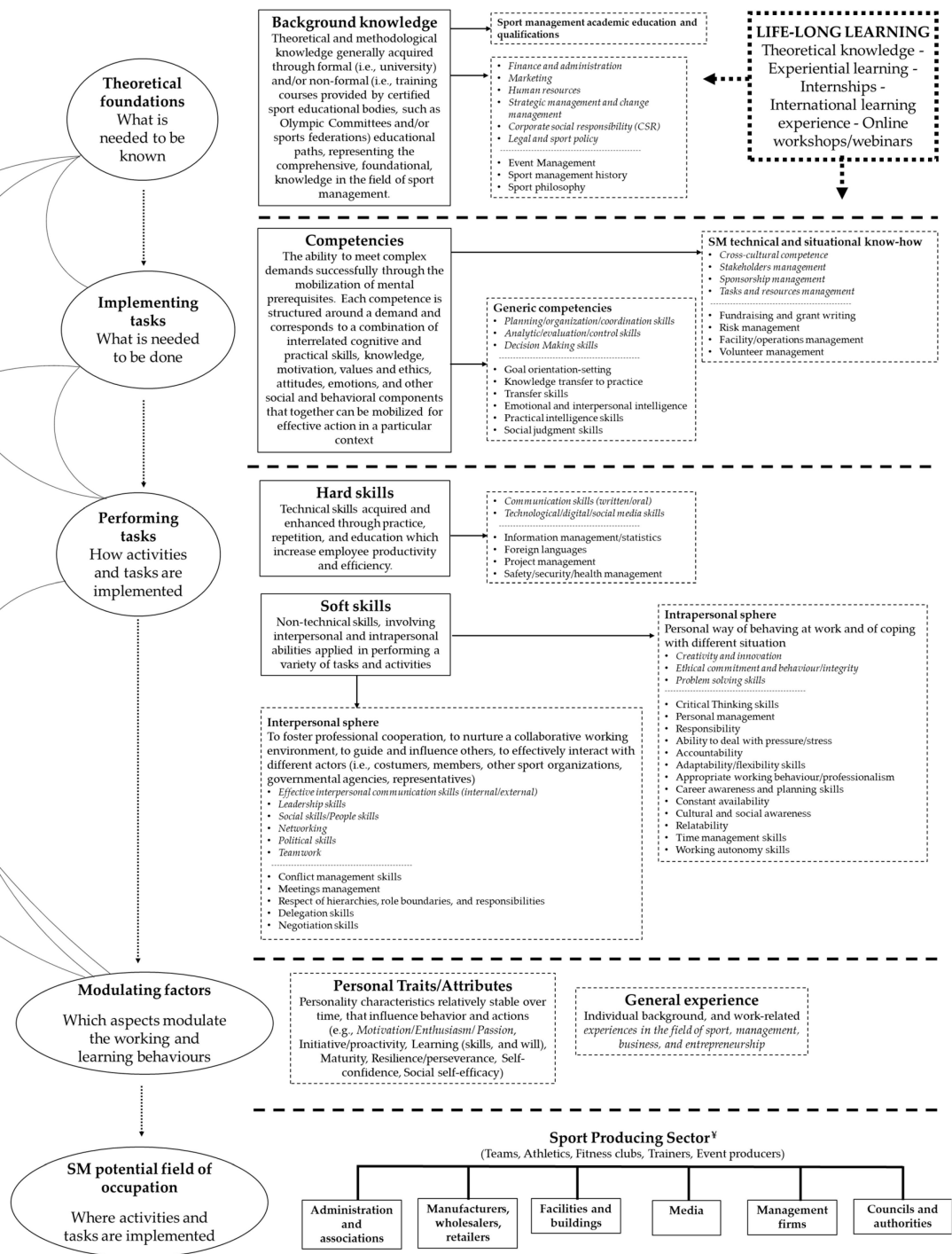
Background knowledge
Theoretical and methodological knowledge generally acquired through formal (i.e., university) and/or non-formal (i.e., training courses provided by certified sport educational bodies, such as Olympic Committees and/or sports federations) educational paths, representing the comprehensive, foundational, knowledge in the field of sport management.

Sport management academic education and qualifications

- *Finance and administration*
- *Marketing*
- *Human resources*
- *Strategic management and change management*
- *Corporate social responsibility (CSR)*
- *Legal and sport policy*

- Event Management
- Sport management history
- Sport philosophy

LIFE-LONG LEARNING
Theoretical knowledge - Experiential learning - Internships - International learning experience - Online workshops/webinars

Theoretical foundations
What is needed to be known

Competencies
The ability to meet complex demands successfully through the mobilization of mental prerequisites. Each competence is structured around a demand and corresponds to a combination of interrelated cognitive and practical skills, knowledge, motivation, values and ethics, attitudes, emotions, and other social and behavioral components that together can be mobilized for effective action in a particular context

SM technical and situational know-how
- *Cross-cultural competence*
- *Stakeholders management*
- *Sponsorship management*
- *Tasks and resources management*

- Fundraising and grant writing
- Risk management
- Facility/operations management
- Volunteer management

Generic competencies
- *Planning/organization/coordination skills*
- *Analytic/evaluation/control skills*
- *Decision Making skills*

- Goal orientation-setting
- Knowledge transfer to practice
- Transfer skills
- Emotional and interpersonal intelligence
- Practical intelligence skills
- Social judgment skills

Implementing tasks
What is needed to be done

Hard skills
Technical skills acquired and enhanced through practice, repetition, and education which increase employee productivity and efficiency.

- *Communication skills (written/oral)*
- *Technological/digital/social media skills*

- Information management/statistics
- Foreign languages
- Project management
- Safety/security/health management

Performing tasks
How activities and tasks are implemented

Soft skills
Non-technical skills, involving interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities applied in performing a variety of tasks and activities

Intrapersonal sphere
Personal way of behaving at work and of coping with different situation
- *Creativity and innovation*
- *Ethical commitment and behaviour/integrity*
- *Problem solving skills*

- Critical Thinking skills
- Personal management
- Responsibility
- Ability to deal with pressure/stress
- Accountability
- Adaptability/flexibility skills
- Appropriate working behaviour/professionalism
- Career awareness and planning skills
- Constant availability
- Cultural and social awareness
- Relatability
- Time management skills
- Working autonomy skills

Interpersonal sphere
To foster professional cooperation, to nurture a collaborative working environment, to guide and influence others, to effectively interact with different actors (i.e., costumers, members, other sport organizations, governmental agencies, representatives)
- *Effective interpersonal communication skills (internal/external)*
- *Leadership skills*
- *Social skills/People skills*
- *Networking*
- *Political skills*
- *Teamwork*

- Conflict management skills
- Meetings management
- Respect of hierarchies, role boundaries, and responsibilities
- Delegation skills
- Negotiation skills

Modulating factors
Which aspects modulate the working and learning behaviours

Personal Traits/Attributes
Personality characteristics relatively stable over time, that influence behavior and actions (e.g., *Motivation/Enthusiasm/ Passion*, Initiative/proactivity, Learning (skills, and will), Maturity, Resilience/perseverance, Self-confidence, Social self-efficacy)

General experience
Individual background, and work-related *experiences in the field of sport, management, business, and entrepreneurship*

SM potential field of occupation
Where activities and tasks are implemented

Sport Producing Sector[¥]
(Teams, Athletics, Fitness clubs, Trainers, Event producers)

| Administration and associations | Manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers | Facilities and buildings | Media | Management firms | Councils and authorities |

Figure 2. The sport management harmonized K/C/S framework.

Proposition 2: *Theoretical foundation—What sport managers need to know.*

The present umbrella review confirmed the relevance of several aspects that should be considered to be the core SM knowledge, independently from the potential differences between SM curricula across national and international contexts.

SM-CI: worldwide, SM higher education curricula aligned with international standards in relation to foundational discipline-related knowledge.

FR: cross-national comparisons in relation to curricula content and delivery methodologies; exploitation of best practices.

Proposition 3: *Implementing tasks—What is needed to be done.*

The implementation of different activities requires sport managers to be proficient in performing a variety of generic and/or technical/situational C to foster organizational effectiveness.

SM-CI: provision of adequate learning opportunities; development of practical skills and competencies to meet industry demands; fostering of the knowledge transfer to practice to facilitate the transition into the labor market.

FR: further explore managers' perceived possess, relevance, and performance in relation to their C, also in different organizational and/or national contexts.

Proposition 4: *Performing tasks—How things get done.*

Competent sport managers should apply both technical and non-technical skills to increase their efficiency and productivity when performing tasks and activities. In particular, technical skills should be developed to ameliorate working processes from a practical perspective. In both the interpersonal and the intrapersonal spheres, SS help employees to effectively interact with colleagues and/or supervisors and/or other stakeholders, nurturing a collaborative, safe, and respectful working environment.

SM-CI: inclusion of HS and SS training in SM educational programs; implementation of tailored training activities; involvement of industry experts in the development of adequate training activities to better align SM education to labor market demands.

FR: further research on the role of soft skills in managing SOs and their relevance in relation to the different managerial levels.

Proposition 5: *Modulating factors.*

Personality traits and previous managerial, sport, and business and entrepreneurship experiences might facilitate sport managers' career progression and job mobility.

SM-CI: recognition of different types of learning and relevant field experiences; alignment of training programs to actual training needs.

FR: further research on the role of personality traits and previous experiences in modulating career success.

Proposition 6: *Transversality within the industry.*

A SM career could occur in different areas of the sport industry. Based on the type of organization, nature, size, structure, and level of professionalization, sport managers could be required to implement different tasks and activities.

SM-CI: a wide variety of K/C/S to ensure adequate opportunities of career development and progression, and potential job mobility; involvement of sport industry experts in SM educational paths (e.g., workshops, seminars, internships); provide students with relevant insights regarding potential occupational opportunities and major expected employability skills in relation to the different labor market areas.

FR: further explore graduates' preparedness in relation to the different SM-related employment sectors.

Proposition 7: *Dynamic interaction and intertwined relations.*

Sport managers' K/C/S training and performance should be considered a dynamic process rather than a stationary structure. In fact, in executing different tasks, sport managers are required to mobilize their K towards the implementation of adequate solutions through the application of C and S, with previous experiences and personality traits modulating this process. Thus, sport managers are urged to be intellectually dynamic, proficient

in variety of aspects, creative, flexible, and smart to implement tailored innovative solutions to actual problems.

SM-CI: develop a comprehensive, holistic educational approach to nurture intellectual dynamicity in sport managers.

FR: investigate the intertwined relations of K, C, S, PT/A, and GE in determining effective SM practices within SOs.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The present UR aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of relevant K/C/S within the SM review literature, taking into consideration different research perspectives represented in the included manuscripts. Major findings substantiate a growing scholars' interest in deepening the understanding of SM educational and professional contexts, and in providing evidence-based information to align industry demands with educational provision. In particular, the present study confirmed the multifaceted nature of this research area, determining the need to harmonize information from different sectors to effectively adjust SM academic and vocational training. To foster the sustainable growth of the sector and to avoid the disconnect between the labor market and the academic environments in relation to graduates and/or employees' preparedness, proficiency, and performance, it is crucial to systematically update SM curricula through a multi-stakeholder perspective and a holistic approach. Finally, the present UR represents an original attempt to: (i) provide a comprehensive, evidence-based overview of existing information on SM-relevant K/C/S collected through the analysis of review manuscripts on different research topics; (ii) highlight the relevance of each recorded item through a systematic and reliable approach to data extraction and synthesis; (iii) develop a harmonized and comprehensive framework based on the identification of an appropriate cluster (e.g., BK, C, HS, SS, GE, PT/A) for each recorded item; (iv) remark on the intertwined and dynamic relationship between the proposed clusters, determining appropriate sport managers' working behaviors and actions in accomplishing activities and tasks and in solving work-related issues (e.g., mobilization of knowledge through tailored competencies and skills); and (v) formulate propositions and guidelines for SM curricula implementation and future research. Therefore, the present findings could be considered a useful tool in fostering the sustainable growth in SM and in providing useful insights to the relevant stakeholders in the sector.

Regarding the major research topics and trends, the retained manuscripts confirmed the complex nature of SM as an academic discipline [2–4]. In fact, no prevalence in relation to the identified research topics emerged, with only leadership-related research accounting for four retained studies. This result confirms that SM represents an avenue of convergent interest from a variety of actors, reflecting the need to address this area through a holistic and dynamic perspective in research, educational, and practical domains to nurture multiple K/C/S in sport managers [1–5]. To promote future employability of SM graduates and to enhance sport managers' effectiveness, the need to integrate the academic and working environments through harmonized educational paths, provision of intertwined theoretical and experiential pedagogical approaches, and learning opportunities emerged [6,25,61,64]. Furthermore, the establishment of inter-institutional cooperation agreements between sport and educational bodies and an international perspective are recommended [4,6,11,40], in line with the European strategies on higher education for universities [65].

The present UM highlighted the need to strengthen the educational focus towards the development of both business and entrepreneurship-related K/C/S, as well as an outstanding cross-cultural competence to meet the challenges related to the social value of sport. In confirming sport as a complex and multifaceted area, sport managers should be able to implement for-profit business plans [30,31,55], efficiently cooperate with sponsors and other stakeholders [29,55], and promote activities addressing the contemporary societal issues [2,28,29,53] through an ethical-based approach [11,53]. Furthermore, the relevance of the non-profit sector [9,28,56] determines the need to continue to professionalize paid staff and leading volunteers within sport organizations to meet the challenges of the working

sector and to foster its sustainable growth. Therefore, lifelong learning and periodical vocational training and courses should be encouraged, targeting K/C/S in relation to the different labor market areas, professional profiles, and levels (e.g., entry, middle, senior; leaders in SOs).

The present study substantiates the leading role of Western liberal societies in the SM research area [3,60], with 86% of the included studies performed in European and North American research settings, and the crucial role of international and continental organizations [8] and policy interventions [41–44] in stimulating the dialogue and exchange between the academic and labor market sectors crucial for nurturing quality education, research, and employability.

Regarding gender, the present UR confirmed the prevalent high imbalance in SOs and the related prejudices/stereotypes regarding the limited women's management and leadership capability [11,52,54,60]. In fact, a strong male hegemony traditionally characterizes sport governance and management, with the glass ceiling phenomenon influencing women's career progression towards executive positions. In considering the gender equality quest in society and policy recommendations in this area [66–71], the empowerment of all women and girls for having a greater role in sports should be nurtured. Furthermore, to achieve an adequate gender representation in SOs and to increase women's competitiveness in the labor market, there is a need to implement inclusive and sustainable educational interventions specifically tailored for women managers and new leaders at different career stages, with the ERASMUS+ New Miracle Project representing a best practice.

Regarding the relevant K/C/S, aside from the central role of foundational BK, leadership skills emerge as the most relevant component, being embedded in both SM-specific and not-specific manuscripts. Given its centrality, a better understanding of the different sport leadership styles and contextual modulators, as well as the implementation of tailored activities to educate SM students and leaders, has been recommended [56–58]. Moreover, the present study emphasizes the crucial role of C and SS to succeed in this working sector. In fact, SS (e.g., effective communication, networking, social skills, and political skills) and C (e.g., planning/organization, analytic/evaluation, and decision making) accounted for a remarkable frequency of occurrence, suggesting their relevant impact in determining sport managers' effectiveness. This result confirms that in highly competitive labor market sectors where knowledge and qualifications are not exclusive discriminants of potential candidates, the possession of non-technical skills should not be underestimated [72]. Therefore, SM education should go beyond a theoretical-based approach, incorporating SS and a competency-based approach within traditional curricula [6,25,36]. In fact, in bridging the existing gap between academic and labor market sectors, higher education is urged to overcome its traditional resistance to change and to reflect the changes occurring in business and society, stimulating knowledge transfer to practice, creativity and innovation, and technological and digital skills [2,37,42,73,74]. Coherently, the present UR presents a comprehensive, evidence-based, harmonized, and dynamic framework with relative propositions reflecting the intertwined relations between tasks to be accomplished and solutions to be implemented through the application of a variety of generic and/or specific C and S.

In conclusion, this work not only contributes to enriching the existing knowledge in relation to SM K/C/S, but also fosters the debate in this "exciting" research area. In particular, evidence-based recommendations for curricula adjustments and future research perspectives have been formulated. However, some limitations may have influenced the results. In particular, the restrictive approach used to ensure the quality of the included studies could have influenced the number of identified records and retained manuscripts. Moreover, being specifically focused on review manuscripts, the present study did not consider primary research. Thus, a broader research approach, enlarging the data collection and including different study typologies, might provide additional meaningful insights in this field. Future research should also be envisioned to verify the accuracy of the proposed harmonized framework. Finally, in considering the complex structure of the SM labor

market, future studies should investigate relevant K/C/S in relation to the different types of SOs and the different managerial levels.

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