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Trends in Job Satisfaction and Employment Conditions Among Sport Sciences Graduates in Spain (2019–2024): A Social Sustainability Perspective

Authors' contribution:

A) conception and design of the study
B) acquisition of data
C) analysis and interpretation of data
D) manuscript preparation
E) obtaining funding

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Abstract

This study analyzes, from a social sustainability perspective, the evolution of working conditions and professional satisfaction among graduates in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences (PASS) in Spain, by comparing two representative cohorts from 2019 and 2024. Using a cross-sectional design and non-probabilistic sampling, data was collected from 1,547 professionals (918 in 2019 and 629 in 2024) through the Total Job Satisfaction questionnaire, which assesses intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall satisfaction. The results reveal a significant decline in intrinsic satisfaction, particularly in key dimensions such as autonomy, recognition, and task variety. Although extrinsic satisfaction also decreased, it remained at moderate dissatisfaction levels, with salary and contract stability being the most critical factors. Regarding contractual conditions, there was an increase in temporary contracts (from 29.6% to 47.4%) and a decrease in civil servant positions (from 20% to 4.5%). Simultaneously, there was a rise in working hours exceeding 35 per week and in the highest salary brackets.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, Social sustainability, Sport sciences graduates, Working conditions, Employment trends.

Introduction

Traditionally, corporate sustainability has been primarily associated with environmental protection. However, over the past decade, a shift toward a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the concept has emerged, encompassing not only environmental but also economic and social dimensions (Hariram et al., 2023). This holistic view suggests that a truly sustainable organization must not only minimize its environmental impact and generate economic value but also promote the well-being of its employees and society as a whole (Universidad Europea, 2025).

Several international organizations and scholars agree that corporate sustainability cannot be separated from the fair and healthy treatment of workers. For instance, ISO 26000 (2010) identifies labor practices, occupational health and safety, and staff development as key components of social responsibility. Similarly, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 1999) defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, and the local community.

Therefore, the notion that employee well-being is not a peripheral issue, but a central element of organizational sustainability is gaining traction. As highlighted by the United Nations Global Compact Spain (2023), sustainability

is often linked to environmental concerns, its social dimension is equally crucial for ensuring equity, inclusion, and well-being in the workplace. Dantas (2025) reinforces this perspective by arguing that social sustainability should be at the heart of good corporate governance, emphasizing the need to build healthy, equitable, and participatory work environments. Recent business literature also reflects this trend. While Mullen (2023) argues that being a sustainable organization requires prioritizing the well-being of both the environment and employees. From this perspective, companies are encouraged to develop policies that ensure decent working conditions, job security, work-life balance, and professional development opportunities—fundamental elements for achieving sustainable balance.

Job Satisfaction as a Component of Social Sustainability

According to existing studies, job satisfaction (JS) plays a key role in organizational sustainability by contributing to healthier workplaces and more resilient companies (Heimerl et al., 2020). In the sports sector, JS is defined as the worker's subjective favorable or unfavorable perception of their job (Robbins & Judge, 2009). There is a significant relationship between JS, motivation, performance, and the quality of services provided (Gálvez-Ruiz et al., 2017; Sánchez-Alcaraz & Parra-Meroño, 2013). In this context, the success of organizations largely depends on the satisfaction of their *internal clients*, as their well-being directly affects both user experience and operational efficiency (Grimaldi-Puyana et al., 2018a). Nonetheless, despite its importance, JS remains an under-researched emotional variable in the sports sector highlighting the need for deeper analysis (Megheirkouni, 2022).

A key factor in employee satisfaction is the influence of purpose and motivation in their work. The pursuit of meaning and purpose has become a driver of intrinsic motivation; employees who feel their work contributes to a greater goal, whether social, environmental, or community-based, tend to report higher levels of satisfaction and engagement (Charles-Leija et al., 2023; Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020). This indicates that when individuals find purpose in their tasks, they experience greater well-being at work. In practice, organizations with meaningful missions and values provide employees with the opportunity to align their work with personal beliefs, thereby enhancing motivation and fulfillment. Intrinsic satisfaction (IS) refers to factors such as recognition received for job performance, responsibility, and elements related to the nature of the task itself. In contrast, extrinsic satisfaction (ES) is associated with external aspects of the job, including work organization, schedules, remuneration, and physical working conditions. Overall JS encompasses both dimensions, offering a comprehensive view of the employee's well-being in the professional environment.

The sports industry has expanded considerably over the past decade, increasing employment opportunities for Sport Sciences graduates (Boned et al., 2015). The intrinsic motivation associated with a vocation for sport stands out among sports professionals. These professionals are employed in diverse sectors including education, management, health & fitness, and high-performance sports (Grimaldi-Puyana et al., 2017). Research shows that "freedom in how to perform work" is the most highly valued factor, whereas 'salary' is often the least satisfying aspect (Aznar Ballesta & Vernetta-Santana, 2023). JS may vary depending on the professional profile, with higher satisfaction reported in management and teaching roles (Grimaldi-Puyana et al., 2018b). These findings align with international studies that emphasize the importance of autonomy and the ability to apply one's skills as key determinants of JS (Breitbach & Ulrich, 2023).

In conclusion, recent scientific evidence portrays a professional landscape in which Sport Sciences graduates, working in a growing sector, report moderately high levels of JS driven by vocation and commitment. However, their satisfaction is also influenced by structural and contractual aspects of their work environment. In this context, the present study aims to analyze and compare the working conditions and JS of Sport Sciences graduates in 2019 and 2024, to identify possible changes or emerging trends over time. This cohort comparison provides a longitudinal perspective on the evolution of job quality in this group and contributes to the ongoing discussion on the social sustainability of work in the field of sport.

Methods

Participants

According to Table 1, the final sample consisted of 1,547 Sport Sciences graduates, distributed across two temporal cohorts: 918 in 2019 and 629 in 2024. In both years, male participants were the majority, accounting for 69.6% in 2019 and 70.1% in 2024, while female participants represented 30.4% and 29.9%, respectively. Regarding age, individuals aged 26 to 40 years represented 63.8% of the sample in 2019 and 51.3% in 2024. The proportion of participants aged 41 to 55 years increased from 17.3% in 2019 to 25.1% in 2024. Participants reported a range of professional experience from 0 to 15 years, reinforcing the diversity and reliability of the sample. The sample size is representative of the total population of Sport Sciences graduates in Spain, including participants from all regions of the country.

In terms of professional field, teaching and education (DOEN) accounted for 43.9% in 2019 and 36.2% in 2024.

Management and administration (GESDIR) represented 16.3% in 2019 and 22.3% in 2024. The health and fitness sector (SAFIT) comprised 20.5% in 2019 and 26.9% in 2024. High-performance sport/training (RENDEN) and leisure/recreation (ORECRE) showed lower percentages in both years. Concerning institutional setting, the public sector accounted for 43.5% in 2019 and 44.2% in 2024. The private sector represented 52.4% in 2019 and 47.2% in 2024. The federated/associative sector increased from 4.1% in 2019 to 8.6% in 2024.

Table 1. Distribution of participants by gender, age, and sector in 2019 vs. 2024.

	2019		2024		Total
Gender	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*
Male	639	69.6	441	70.1	1080
Female	279	30.4	188	29.9	467
Age	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	
18-25	86	9.4	46	7.3	132
26-30	205	22.3	121	19.2	326
31-35	220	24	100	15.9	320
36-40	161	17.5	108	17.2	269
41-45	116	12.6	108	17.2	224
46-50	63	6.9	73	11.6	136
51-55	43	4.7	50	7.9	93
56-60	16	1.7	19	3	35
61+	8	0.9	4	0.6	12
Activity	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	
DOEN	403	43.9	228	36.2	631
GESDIR	150	16.3	140	22.3	290
SAFIT	188	20.5	169	26.9	357
RENDEN	79	8.6	41	6.5	120
ORECRE	98	10.7	51	8.1	149
Sector	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	
Public	399	43.5	278	44.2	677
Private	481	52.4	297	47.2	778
Feder/Associa	38	4.1	54	8.6	92

Note: DOEN: Teaching and Education; GESDIR: Management and Administration; SAFIT: Health and Fitness; RENDEN: High Performance/Coaching; ORECRE: Leisure and Recreation; Feder/Associa: Federated/Associative.

Procedure

This study followed a cross-sectional design, using non-probabilistic convenience sampling. Data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed via the Microsoft 365 platform provided by the University of Seville. Data collection was carried out in two different years: the first in 2019 and the second five years later, in 2024. The questionnaire was developed in collaboration with the Official College of Physical Education Graduates (COLEF), which also facilitated contact with GCCAFD graduates affiliated with the professional association.

The inclusion criteria for participation were: (i) holding a degree in Sport Sciences (GCCAFYD) and (ii) being actively employed with a valid contract at the time of data collection. The exclusion criteria were: (i) not having completed 100% of the questionnaire, and (ii) not currently working in one of the professional areas of the GCCAFD degree within the sports sector: Teaching and Education (DOEN), Management and Administration (GESDIR), Health and Fitness (SAFIT), High Performance/Coaching (RENDEN), or Leisure and Recreation (ORECRE). This study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee

of the local university (ID: 2024/130). Additionally, informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Instruments

The instrument used was divided into two sections. The first section collected sociodemographic variables (i.e., age, sex, professional activity, and work setting), as well as objective information on working conditions, including contract type, number of working hours per week, and monthly salary. In the second section, the Overall Job Satisfaction questionnaire developed by Warr et al. (1979) was administered. This tool assesses JS through three second-order dimensions: (i) IS, referring to aspects such as recognition at work, assigned responsibility, and the content of the tasks performed; (ii) ES, which assesses external factors such as work organization, working hours, salary, and physical working conditions; and (iii) overall satisfaction, which combines both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions to provide a global assessment of the employee's satisfaction level. For this study, the validated Spanish version of the questionnaire, approved by the Spanish Ministry of Labour, was used.

Originally developed in the United Kingdom, this instrument is known for its ease of use and is designed to measure employee satisfaction regardless of educational background or employment sector. Its comprehensive approach enables the analysis of multiple facets of the work experience, providing detailed insights into the factors influencing overall employee satisfaction. In addition to these second-order dimensions, the instrument includes fifteen first-order dimensions, each assessed using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "Very dissatisfied" and 7 "Very satisfied."

The specific items evaluated include: working conditions (Q1), freedom to choose one's own work method (Q2), relationship with coworkers (Q3), recognition for a job well done (Q4), relationship with immediate supervisor (Q5), and assigned responsibility (Q6). The questionnaire also assesses satisfaction with salary (Q7), the opportunity to use one's abilities (Q8), relationships between management and workers (Q9), and opportunities for promotion (Q10). Other evaluated aspects include company management (Q11), responsiveness to employee suggestions (Q12), working hours (Q13), task variety (Q14), and job stability (Q15). The structure of the questionnaire and the breadth of dimensions assessed allow for a comprehensive view of JS, offering valuable insights for both researchers and human resources professionals seeking to enhance employee well-being and performance across different work environments.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v.29.0 was used under an institutional license granted by the University of Seville. First, a descriptive analysis was conducted, presenting means and standard deviations for sociodemographic and objective working condition variables. Second, the Overall Job Satisfaction questionnaire data from the years 2019 and 2024 were analyzed. The normality of the data was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, since the sample size in both years exceeded 50 participants. Results indicated that the distributions for ES, IS, and TS did not follow a normal distribution in either year ($p < 0.05$).

Given the study's aim of analyzing changes in working conditions and JS among Sport Sciences graduates (GCCAFYD) between 2019 and 2024, and considering the non-normality of the data, the Mann–Whitney U test was used as a non-parametric alternative to the independent samples t-test. The results of the Mann–Whitney U test revealed statistically significant differences across all dimensions of JS analyzed, indicating that perceptions of JS varied significantly between the 2019 and 2024 cohorts ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, item-level differences were analyzed for each of the 15 first-order JS questions (Q1–Q15) using the Mann–Whitney U test for each item.

Results

Table 2 presents data on the working conditions of Sport Sciences graduates (GCCAFYD) in 2019 and 2024, analyzing three key dimensions: type of employment contract, weekly working hours, and net monthly salary. Regarding contract type, there was a considerable decrease in the proportion of professionals with civil servant contracts, dropping from 20.0% in 2019 to 4.5% in 2024. Similarly, self-employed professionals also declined from 16.3% to 7.5%. In contrast, temporary contracts increased significantly, rising from 29.6% to 47.4%, becoming the most common contract type in 2024. Permanent contracts, which were already the majority in 2019 (32.2%), also increased their relative share, reaching 39.3%. Internship or scholarship-based contracts remained low in both years (around 1.5%).

Regarding weekly working hours, there was an increase in professionals working more than 35 hours per week (from 41.2% in 2019 to 49.3% in 2024), which may reflect job consolidation or a greater workload. Simultaneously, the percentage of professionals working less than 20 hours per week declined from 20.8% in 2019 to 14.9% in 2024. Medium-range schedules (between 21 and 35 hours) remained relatively stable across both periods. As for the net monthly salary, a general improvement was observed. The proportion of professionals earning less than €500 decreased from 9.6% in 2019 to 3.3% in 2024, as did those earning between €501 and €1000. Conversely,

the proportion of professionals in higher salary brackets increased, especially in the €2001–2500 range (from 14.7% to 24.2%), €2501–3000 (from 3.3% to 9.2%), and over €3000 (from 1.4% to 6.8%). This trend suggests an overall improvement in salary quality for the professional group between 2019 and 2024.

Table 2. Employment conditions of graduates in Sport Sciences (CAFYD) in 2019 vs. 2024

	2019		2024		Total
Type of Contract	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	
Civil servant	184	20	28	4.5	212
Permanent	296	32.2	247	39.3	543
Self-employed	150	16.3	47	7.5	197
Scholarship	16	1.7	9	1.4	25
Temporary	272	29.6	298	47.4	570
Weekly Hours	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	
Less than 15	100	10.9	46	7.3	146
16-20	91	9.9	48	7.6	139
21-25	102	11.1	52	8.3	154
26-30	118	12.9	75	11.9	193
31-35	129	14.1	98	15.6	227
More than 35	378	41.2	310	49.3	688
Salary	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	
Less than 500	88	9.6	21	3.3	109
501-750	82	8.9	29	4.6	111
751-1000	128	13.9	61	9.7	189
1001-1500	206	22.4	135	21.5	341
1501-2000	236	25.7	130	20.7	366
2001-2500	135	14.7	152	24.2	287
2501-3000	30	3.3	58	9.2	88
More than 3001	13	1.4	43	6.8	56

Table 3 presents the JS data for the years 2019 and 2024. The results indicate a general downward trend in JS among Sport Sciences graduates (GCCAFYD) between these two years. Overall, while in 2019 the responses tended to fall between "moderately satisfied" and "neutral," in 2024 there was a shift toward "moderately dissatisfied" levels in several key areas. According to the first-order dimensions, satisfaction with physical working conditions (Q1) remained stable, with a mean of 5.24 in 2019 and 5.33 in 2024. However, other aspects, such as freedom to choose one's own work method (Q2), showed a statistically significant decline ($p < 0.05$), dropping from 5.78 in 2019 to 5.43 in 2024. Similarly, satisfaction with the relationship with the immediate supervisor (Q5) and responsiveness to suggestions (Q12) followed a downward trend, though the differences were not statistically significant. Of note is the continued low satisfaction in areas such as salary (Q7), opportunities for promotion (Q10), and company management (Q11). In 2024, negative perceptions of these factors became even more pronounced, suggesting a worsening of dissatisfaction with economic conditions and career development prospects.

With respect to second-order dimensions, the IS experienced a considerable decline, dropping from a mean score of 34.8 in 2019 (classified as "neutral") to 28.2 in 2024 ("moderately dissatisfied"). This shift may be attributed to lower levels of perceived recognition for a job well done (Q4), reduced JS with assigned responsibility (Q6), and less variety in tasks performed (Q14).

While ES also decreased in average values, falling from 38.2 in 2019 to 31.9 in 2024. Despite this decline, the qualitative classification remained 'neutral', reporting a deterioration in elements such as salary and working conditions without reaching widespread dissatisfaction. In line with these results, TS dropped from 72.9 to 60.1, maintaining a 'neutral' classification but clearly

reflecting a significant reduction in overall satisfaction perception.

These findings highlighted a deterioration in graduates' perception of their working conditions, particularly in areas related to recognition, autonomy, and stability. Although some extrinsic factors such as work organization remained relatively stable, dissatisfaction with compensation and professional development opportunities increased notably in 2024. This phenomenon may be linked to structural changes in the labor market or to adverse economic conditions negatively impacting the perception of stability and career growth among Sport Sciences graduates.

Table 3. Differences in JS between the Years 2019 vs 2024.

	2019			2024			
	M	***DT***	**Level**	***M***	***DT***	**Level**	**Difference**
Q1	5.24	1.59	Moderately satisfied	5.33	1.74	Moderately satisfied	0.09
Q2	5.78	1.48	Moderately satisfied	5.43	1.77	Moderately satisfied	-0.35*
Q3	5.4	1.61	Moderately satisfied	5.32	1.73	Moderately satisfied	-0.08
Q4	4.63	1.78	Neutral	4.45	1.97	Neutral	-0.18
Q5	4.89	1.91	Neutral	4.87	2	Neutral	-0.02
Q6	5.5	1.55	Moderately satisfied	5.3	1.78	Moderately satisfied	-0.2*
Q7	4.25	1.77	Neutral	4.04	2	Neutral	-0.21*
Q8	5.35	1.59	Moderately satisfied	5.26	1.8	Moderately satisfied	-0.09
Q9	4.83	1.81	Neutral	4.79	1.9	Neutral	-0.04
Q10	3.86	2.02	Moderately dissatisfied	3.78	2.08	Moderately dissatisfied	-0.08
Q11	4.08	1.8	Neutral	4.01	1.96	Neutral	-0.07
Q12	4.59	1.79	Neutral	4.51	1.94	Neutral	-0.08
Q13	4.89	1.8	Neutral	4.87	1.96	Neutral	-0.02
Q14	5.22	1.62	Moderately satisfied	4.99	1.84	Neutral	-0.23
Q15	4.73	2.05	Neutral	4.91	2.08	Neutral	0.18
IS	4.99	1,32	Neutral	4.08	2.25	Neutral	-0.91
ES	4.79	1.21	Neutral	4.04	2.17	Neutral	-0.75
TS	5.12	1.28	Moderately satisfied	4.31	2.32	Neutral	-0.81

*Note. Values expressed as Means (M); standard deviation (SD); * statistically significant two-tailed correlation at the 0.05 level;* I*S: Intrinsic Satisfaction;* E*S: Extrinsic Satisfaction;* T*S: Total Satisfaction*

Discussion

The results of this study reveal a significant decline in JS levels among Sport Sciences graduates (GCCAFYD) between 2019 and 2024. This finding is particularly relevant in a sector historically characterized by high intrinsic motivation and vocational commitment, as supported by previous studies (Breitbach & Ulrich, 2023; Grimaldi-Puyana et al., 2018b). Notably, IS showed the sharpest decline, reflecting a loss of autonomy, recognition, and task variety factors traditionally considered pillars of occupational well-being in this professional group.

The drop in JS observed between 2019 and 2024 indicates a concerning and relatively novel trend in the sport sector literature. Previous research generally described JS among these professionals as moderate to high (Breitbach & Ulrich, 2023; Grimaldi-Puyana et al., 2018a). For instance, Breitbach and Ulrich (2023) reported average satisfaction levels close to 86% (6 out of 7 points) among international Sport Science professionals, highlighting autonomy as a key factor. In contrast, the current study reveals a significant deterioration, especially in IS, suggesting that recent factors may have undermined even those aspects traditionally rated positively by graduates.

Despite the overall decline, certain patterns in our results align with trends identified in prior studies. In both 2019 and 2024, extrinsic factors such as salary and promotion opportunities remained among the lowest-rated aspects (Aznar Ballesta & Vernetta Santana, 2023; Koç & Er, 2020). This supports previous findings that remuneration is one of the main sources of dissatisfaction in the sports sector (Gálvez-Ruiz et al., 2017). Likewise, job autonomy such as freedom in choosing one's work methods remained one of the best-rated facets in our study,

consistent with findings by Aznar and Vernetta (2023) or Breitbach and Ulrich (2023).

These studies emphasize autonomy as a key component of JS among sports technicians and Sport Sciences graduates, while salary typically receives the lowest scores. These parallels indicate that, despite temporal shifts, certain core determinants of satisfaction remain constant: intrinsic motivations (e.g., vocation and personal fulfillment) continue to play a positive role, whereas deficits in extrinsic factors (e.g., salary, stability) continue to weigh overall job evaluations.

The most notable divergence in this study from existing literature was the pronounced drop on IS in 2024, a phenomenon not previously documented in this population. Earlier national studies showed that IS tended to remain relatively stable across different professional subgroups (Grimaldi-Puyana et al., 2018a), suggesting that job conditions, rather than personal characteristics, usually drive variations in satisfaction.

Therefore, the homogeneous decline in IS observed in 2024 points to the influence of broader contextual factors. One major event during the 2019–2024 period was the COVID-19 pandemic, whose repercussions profoundly affected the sports sector. The temporary closure of facilities, cancellation of competitions, and resulting job insecurity may have undermined feelings of stability, recognition, and professional growth opportunities. Recent evidence indicates that crises of this magnitude tend to diminish JS and confidence in career trajectories (Megheirkouni, 2022). In this study, it was reflected in lower scores on items related to autonomy, task variety, and performance recognition, intrinsic aspects that saw the greatest decline in 2024, suggesting that the pandemic context significantly contributed to eroding internal motivation among these professionals.

Another contextual factor to consider is the evolution of the labor market for Sport Sciences graduates during the five-year period analyzed. The number of active graduates increased substantially (from ~10,000 in 2019 to ~15,000 in 2024, according to official data) (Consejo General de la Educación Física y Deportiva, 2023), according to official data), implying greater competition for available positions. This expansion of the workforce—without a proportional increase in quality job opportunities—may have led to greater contractual precariousness (e.g., part-time or temporary jobs) and salary stagnation in the sector. Aznar and Vernetta (2023) had already reported that many sports technicians in Spain worked under temporary or even volunteer contracts, often earning less than €500 per month. These unfavorable extrinsic conditions, persisting over time, help explain why ES remained at neutral or low levels in both 2019 and 2024. It is plausible that, in the absence of substantial improvements in pay and stability, even the initial intrinsic motivation of young professionals becomes eroded after years of facing the same limitations.

In this regard, it is relevant to frame these findings through the lens of social sustainability, understood as the system's ability to offer decent, stable, and fulfilling working conditions over time. Social sustainability in the sports sector requires not only continuous employment opportunities but also the preservation of emotional well-being, intrinsic motivation, and vocational engagement among professionals. The decline in JS documented in this study could therefore be considered a sign of imbalance in the sector's social sustainability, highlighting the urgent need to review employment policies and working conditions in sports organizations.

In summary, the comparison with previous research suggested continuity in the core factors influencing JS among sports professionals, while also revealing a recent negative shift in its intensity. Until recently, the literature described Sport Sciences graduates as generally moderately satisfied (Breitbach & Ulrich, 2023) and even highly motivated to remain in their careers long-term (Stevens et al., 2018). However, this study highlighted a significant decline that cannot be overlooked. If this downward trend continues, it could have serious implications for talent retention and organizational performance in the sports sector, as low satisfaction levels are associated with higher risks of burnout, absenteeism, and professional attrition (Ertekin & Avunduk, 2021). In line with recommendations from previous authors, it is imperative that sports institutions implement proactive strategies to improve extrinsic working conditions (e.g., contractual stability, remuneration, and promotion opportunities) and strengthen intrinsic factors (e.g., recognition and autonomy) among their employees (Gálvez-Ruiz et al., 2017). Only through interventions that address both basic needs, and vocational motivations can the observed trend be mitigated and a more satisfied, stable, and socially sustainable workforce be ensured in the sports sector.

This study presents several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of causal relationships between the variables analyzed, thus limiting the ability to infer whether changes in JS are the result of specific factors or broader trends in the labor market. Moreover, the sample was obtained through non-probabilistic convenience sampling, which may introduce selection bias and limit the generalizability of the findings to the entire population of Sport Sciences graduates (GCCAFD).

Another important limitation lies in the subjective nature of JS, assessed through a self-reported questionnaire. Although the instrument used has been validated in previous studies, respondents' perceptions may be influenced by contextual, personal, or emotional factors at the time of evaluation. Additionally, certain variables that could have influenced JS —such as contract type, working hours, or workload—were not included, leaving room for

future research to adopt a more holistic approach. Finally, it should be noted that salary comparisons between 2019 and 2024 do not account for inflation or changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which may affect the interpretation of income progression over time.

Practical Applications

The findings have important implications for talent management and labor policy development in the sports sector. First, the results highlight the need to enhance perceptions of stability and professional development among GCCAFD graduates. Sports organizations and educational institutions should collaborate to design strategies that facilitate a more structured career transition, promoting long-term growth and stability opportunities. In particular, the areas identified with lower JS such as remuneration, promotion opportunities, and relationships with supervisors reflect the importance of implementing measures to improve these aspects. Furthermore, salary incentive policies, career development plans, and continuous training programs may help increase worker motivation and commitment, thereby reducing job turnover and the risk of demotivation.

Moreover, the decline in IS indicates that sports professionals could benefit from greater autonomy and recognition in their roles. Thus, implementing participatory leadership strategies and fostering a positive organizational climate may improve perceptions of being valued and contribute to greater workplace well-being. Also, making improvements in internal communication and the inclusion of employees in decision-making processes may enhance organizational identification and strengthen job commitment. Finally, the study's results reinforce the importance of continued research into the evolution of JS in the sports sector. Finally, the academic institutions or professional organizations should continue monitoring these indicators to adapt their training programs and employment policies to the changing needs of the current labor market. Future studies could explore in greater depth the differences between specific sectors within the sports industry and assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving job quality in this field.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that JS among GCCAFD graduates has experienced a significant decline between 2019 and 2024. This reduction is particularly evident in IS, indicating lower recognition of performance, decreased autonomy at work, and less task variety. Likewise, while ES did not reach critical levels of dissatisfaction, it shows a deterioration in the perception of factors such as salary and job stability. The decline in TS suggests that graduates perceive a less favorable work environment compared to previous years. Factors such as business management, promotion opportunities, and relationships with immediate supervisors appear to have influenced this perception. Additionally, the differences observed in some dimensions were statistically significant, further reinforcing the validity of these findings.

These results underscore the need to implement workplace strategies to improve perceptions of stability, recognition, and professional development among GCCAFD graduates. In this context, it is essential to consider the concept of social sustainability, understood as the labor system's ability to maintain dignified, motivating, and emotionally healthy conditions over time for its workers. Promoting social sustainability in the sports sector would not only enhance individual well-being but also strengthen the overall stability of the sector. Improving working conditions and implementing recognition policies may help mitigate the decline in JS levels observed in this study. Future research could explore the specific causes of this decline and propose interventions that foster a more satisfying, motivating, and socially sustainable work environment for these professionals.

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