

# SPORTS OFFICIATING IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Recruitment, Pathways, Barriers

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MEMOS XXIV

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## Abstract

Little is known about the officiating population in Trinidad & Tobago. The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of the sporting landscape as it affects the sports officials. Using questionnaire data from two surveys constructed for two different groups, information was obtained on the demographics of the sporting population, the entry into the field, the training, the officiating career and the facilitators and stressors of the avocation. Sport officials began officiating out of interest, social and intrinsic reasons. Many continue for the same reasons as they started, however many suggested that reasons such as abuse, burnout, and poor organisational support can be factors that would make them quit. Recommendations were provided which focused on officials' data collection and tracking, development and visible organisational support.

Sixty-five sporting officials participated in the survey for sports official from thirteen sporting disciplines, and fourteen National Sporting Organisations participated in a survey geared towards the sport governing bodies. The findings from the results obtained from both surveys indicated that there was a need for better data capture and recording of this particular human resource set. The motives for being a sports official in Trinidad & Tobago were no different from what is found in the literature, nor are there any differences in what causes them to remain a sports official or even to exit the role. The level of importance may differ, but the reasons are generally the same.

The action plan developed has taken into consideration the resources available within National Sporting Organisations and its supporting stakeholders in this field. Understanding the possible target groups that can be feeders into this sports role is key to ensuring that there is pipeline. Planned development of individuals, inclusive of talent identification, development and even fast-tracking to regional and international exposure where need be, maybe some of the strategies to be employed to keep individuals engaged and motivated within the field. Use of the administrative tools available to protect the sports official, but also educate the key stakeholders on the importance of this role and the expected conduct of persons that work in these roles may seem to be a simple action but it is required to protect individuals in this critical sports role.

## Résumé

On sait peu de choses sur la population des officiels à Trinité-et-Tobago. L'objectif de cette étude était d'acquérir des connaissances sur le paysage sportif tel qu'il affecte les officiels du sport. En utilisant les données de deux questionnaires construits pour deux groupes différents, des informations ont été obtenues sur la démographie de la population sportive, l'entrée dans le domaine, la formation, la carrière d'officiel et les facilitateurs et les facteurs de stress de l'avocation. Les officiels sportifs ont commencé à officier par intérêt, pour des raisons sociales et

intrinsèques. Beaucoup continuent pour les mêmes raisons qu'à leurs débuts, mais beaucoup ont suggéré que des raisons telles que les abus, l'épuisement professionnel et le manque de soutien organisationnel peuvent être des facteurs qui les feraient abandonner. Les recommandations formulées portent sur la collecte et le suivi des données, le développement et le soutien organisationnel visible des officiels.

Soixante-cinq officiels sportifs ont participé à l'enquête destinée aux officiels de treize disciplines sportives, et quatorze organisations sportives nationales ont participé à une enquête destinée aux organes directeurs du sport. Les résultats des deux enquêtes ont montré qu'il était nécessaire d'améliorer la saisie et l'enregistrement des données concernant cet ensemble particulier de ressources humaines. Les motivations pour être un officiel du sport à Trinité-et-Tobago n'étaient pas différentes de ce que l'on trouve dans la littérature, et il n'y a pas de différences dans ce qui les pousse à rester un officiel du sport ou même à quitter ce rôle. Le niveau d'importance peut différer, mais les raisons sont généralement les mêmes.

Le plan d'action élaboré a pris en considération les ressources disponibles au sein des organisations sportives nationales et des parties prenantes qui les soutiennent dans ce domaine. Il est essentiel de comprendre les groupes cibles susceptibles d'être intégrés dans ce rôle sportif afin de s'assurer de l'existence d'une filière. Le développement planifié des individus, y compris l'identification des talents, le développement et même l'accélération de l'exposition régionale et internationale si nécessaire, peut être une des stratégies à employer pour garder les individus engagés et motivés dans ce domaine. L'utilisation des outils administratifs disponibles pour protéger l'officiel sportif, mais aussi pour éduquer les principales parties prenantes sur l'importance de ce rôle et la conduite attendue des personnes qui travaillent dans ces rôles peut sembler être une action simple mais elle est nécessaire pour protéger les individus dans ce rôle sportif critique.

## 1 Introduction

There are three categories of participants directly involved in organised sporting competition on the courts, the mat or the field of play. They are the athletes, the coaches and the officials. This project focuses on the third component of this triangular grouping, assessing officials' presence in sport in Trinidad & Tobago and the space that they occupy.

Referees, umpires and judges, to name a few of the sport officiating roles, collectively known as sports officials, are key but often unassuming stakeholders in sport. They occupy a critical role in overseeing the competition, maintaining competitive fairness, and providing a safe environment for all participants either at the highest professional level or at the school and grassroots levels of competition. This sports role ensures that the rules and regulations are adhered to, thereby giving the impression that officiating has a "policing" nature attached to it (Phillips & Fairley, 2014). Without sport officials, competitive sport would be reduced to play (Forbes, Livingston, & Thevakumar, 2018).

Sports officiating is a challenging and complex role. Aside from executing regulatory duties, sports officials have to operate either under physical stress, in a fast-paced environment with time and pressure constraints, and exercise decision-making skills that are without fear and influence. These elements describe the complexity of the sport officiating role. Yet, at face value, the public is unaware of the physical, cognitive, intra- and inter-personal skills required by the sports official to execute their work, as this sports role is viewed of as the "seen" but "unheard of" group within the sporting landscape (O'Brien & Rynne, 2021).

Within the sporting system in Trinidad & Tobago, each sporting discipline has its own group of steadfast volunteers that officiate at school, community, club and national sporting events to ensure that the sports specific rules and regulations of the game, competition or meet are upheld by the competitors involved. Over the past couple of years, there have been sporadic news features and special interest stories in the local media on individuals that have officiated at the world level, either at the Olympic Games or at World Cup events in their respective sport. However, there is little to no academic research

on topics of interests regarding sports officials within Trinidad & Tobago or even the wider English-speaking Caribbean. Anecdotally, information on this group is not even available at the national sport level either at the ministerial or National Olympic Committee level.

In this nation, this sports role can be considered as a group of “undocumented” workers to which, from a policy point of view, very little is known about why they have pursued this pastime, how they are trained, why do they keep volunteering year in year and year out for their sporting discipline, what are their stressors, how do they progress within the officiating group, and why do they quit. There is growing research and information on this in developed nations, as researchers and practitioners have realised that sports officials require the same construction of career progressions and pathways as coaches and athletes, as this architecture will assist in meaningful sports participation, as well as maximising talent development (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, 2015).

By understanding the dynamics of sports officiating at the macro level, and then focusing on the granular level, local researchers and sports administrators can identify and understand the motivators and stressors sports officials encounter within their career and can develop the strategies to support the individuals throughout their life cycle as an official in the ever-evolving, fluid environment of sport, so that they can keep apace with the coaches and athletes. In following this roadmap, sports administrators will be on the path to generating a constant flow through the officiating “pipeline” to assure the long-term sustainability of this group for each sporting discipline in Trinidad & Tobago.

## 1.1 Research Aim

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge and understanding of sports officiating ecosystem in Trinidad & Tobago, by seeking responses to the following research questions:

1. What is the current demographic composition of sport officials within sports supported by the Trinidad & Tobago Olympic Committee?
2. What is the career progression of individuals in sports officiating within his / her sport?
3. What is the experience of sports officials going through their developmental pathways?
4. What are the barriers and facilitators encountered by sports officials in Trinidad & Tobago?

From this, the key findings will be summarised, with the recommendations presented to local National Sporting Organisations and the National Olympic Committee to optimize their programmes for sports officials.



## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

There are various reasons why persons participate in sport and, by extension, sports officiating. This literature review examines the factors that lead persons to officiate, the structures in place to support sports officials, the dynamics that motivate them to continue as a sports official or to quit the avocation.

The literature review has been divided into three main sections (a) Sports Participation, (b) Sports Officiating, and (c) Facilitators and Stressors to Recruitment, Involvement and Resignation.

### 2.2 Sports Participation: From Athlete to Sports Official

Research has shown sports participation on a regular basis offers potential benefits to an individual's physical health, mental well-being (such as reduced anxiety and stress), a positive impact on body image and enhanced self-esteem (Koivula, 1999). However, the potential benefits from sports participation may not be what only motivates individuals to participate. Perceived benefits such as weight control, appearance, fun and excitement (Koivula, 1999), along with social connectedness, social support and peer bonding (Eime, Harvey, Brown, & Payne, 2010) are factors that should be considered, however they are dependent on age and gender and what is desirable for each group.

These motives are what attract and retain persons within sports. For many individuals, sports is a major activity that they are engaged in throughout their lifespan (Kenyon & McPherson, 1974) and as such, the role and involvement of the individuals in sport will evolve from athlete to either administrator, parent, coach, consumer or sports official (Snyder, 1983). For many, the continued involvement in sport in the different sport roles after the twilight of the competitive playing years can be attributed primarily to the socialisation aspect of the sport – social attachments, the mutual esteem and companionship (Snyder, 1983).

Sports participation – its motives and benefits – formulate the groundwork to understanding the career transitions of athletes, parents and other sporting roles and with that assist in developing strategies to formulate more sustainable recruitment practices.

## 2.3 Sport Officiating

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) has defined an official as “any person who controls the actual play of a competition by using rules and laws of the sport to make judgements on rule infringement, performance, time and score. Officials play a key role in ensuring the spirit of the game and / or event is observed by all” (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2014). This sport role is an essential element in the quality of most sporting contests. Without the rules and regulations, sport is reduced to play (Forbes, Livingston, & Thevakumar, 2018). They provide a setting for competition, facilitate the engagement of individual players and importantly enhance the process of fair play (Grunska, 2003). As such they are required to have a variety of skills to “bring control to chaos, understand fairness, promote safety, and encourage good sportsmanship” (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2014).

Aside from adjudicating and maintaining fairness and fair play in an event, the contribution of the sports officials transcends sport. By their presence they promote involvement in physical activity bringing about health and social benefits by permitting involvement in physical activity, but also the skills they develop in their capacity as a sports officials, such as leadership, decision making, working under pressure, conflict resolution, managing stress are transferrable to their working environment and life, in general (Forbes, Livingston, & Thevakumar, 2018).

### 2.3.1 Diversity of Officiating Roles

There are different types of officials for the different sporting disciplines, with a variety of specific demands, roles and responsibilities. Referees, umpires, judges (variety of types), competition marshals, timekeepers, starters all form part of the group called officials. This list is exhaustive, as each sport will have a group of sport officials that will oversee the specific requirements (time limitation, management of the players, rules, criteria assessment) of that sport.

Just as sports and the environment they are played in differ from each other, so too does the nature of the tasks in sports officiating varies amongst the sports and also within sports (Forbes, Wattie, Cunningham, & Livingston, 2020) and as such approaches to categorise sports officials have been attempted by sports researchers based on the complexity, diversity and range of officiating tasks. For

the purpose of this paper, attention would not be placed on the academic studies placed on this topic, but to recognise that the role of all sports officials are not the same.

## 2.4 Motives to Officiate: Recruitment, Retention, Development

### 2.4.1 Recruitment & Retention

The sectors of sport and events rely heavily on volunteers (Kim, 2018) who with dedication and commitment, work towards sustaining the lifespan of teams, clubs, national associations and even National Olympic Committees. Coaches, administrators, players and even sport officials are, in the majority of cases volunteers.

Aside for considering the reasons for sports participation of individuals in these roles, the motivational factors to volunteer and be involved in sport and sporting events must be assimilated for the sports officials. Factors such as community involvement, the love of the sport, extrinsic awards, career orientation, personal growth, interpersonal contact (Kim, 2018) would play a role for an individual entering into the sports' official role.

From the outside looking in, sports officials make a significant contribution to organised sport (Cunningham, Mergler, & Wattie, 2022), yet many enter the vocation unaware of how difficult a role this is, as persons must be physically fit, have the ability to make split-second decisions, communicate with coaches and athletes, have extensive rule knowledge and deal with tremendous pressure and scrutiny (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, 2015). With these issues to contend with, for many sports officials, the motive to continue in this role is the same as for the reason they started in this role, under the rationale that they are essentially volunteers and are intrinsically motivated (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, Why Ref? Understanding Sport Officials' Motivation to Being, Continue and Quit, 2015). However, value is added when sports officials see efforts of organisational support and perceive that the rewards associated with their participation positively benefit them (Livingston L. , et al., 2017).

### 2.4.2 Drop Out

It is expected that there will be a natural movement of sports officials out of the role due to the advanced age of the official, decreasing physical capability to maintain the required standards, declining

health and death. However, aside from these natural causes, many sports in developed countries have seen high attrition rates from this sports role. It is a pervasive and persistent problem (Cuskelly & Hoyer, 2013) that not only threatens sport, but it leads to a sunk cost as resources (time, human and capital) have been invested in training and recruiting, training and developing new officials to ensure that there is a pool (Cuskelly & Hoyer, 2013), (Livingston, et al., 2017)

Academic studies have cited different motives of drop out from the avocation. Some studies suggest that the motivation to quit is primarily linked to the category the sports officials' role fall within in, with the main reasons being attributed to lack of recognition, lack of respect and too much stress (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, 2015) or the possibility that were not intrinsically motivated to officiate. Abuse by athletes, spectators and coaches have also attributed to the drop out of officials, either young, inexperienced officials who are negatively affected by the threat of physical and verbal abuse or experienced officials, who tend to normalise abuse but may cite other reasons like career and family demands for their motive to quit officiating (Livingston, et al., 2017). Poor quality training (Livingston, et al., 2017), inequitable treatment regarding career development and advancement, along with the lack of perceived organisational support have also been listed as reasons why sports officials quit (Livingston, et al., 2017), (Mergler, 2020).

#### 2.4.3 Female Sports Officials

Women are involved and occupy nearly every role in sport at the grassroots, club and national level. They are volunteers, coaches, athletes, administrators. Researchers have acknowledged that sport, as an institution, is an avenue for women to become involved and to carry out leadership abilities and capabilities (Aman, Bin Yusof, Maimunah, & Abu Bakar, 2018). Yet, though there is progress in providing sport opportunities for women, women are still under-represented in the roles of power (Tingle, Warner, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2014). As a sports official, not only in female sports, but also in the male version of the sport (for example lawn tennis, football, basketball), they not only hold a position of authority and exercise power during the game, but by their entry into this sports role they have assisted in bolstering the numbers of individuals operating as sports officials (Tingle, Warner, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2014).

Female officials have made significant strides in overcoming barriers and advancing gender equity in sports (Tingle, Warner, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2014), yet there have been documented research of females, particularly those officiating the male sports, quitting this sport role for reasons such as lack of mutual respect, incivility and gendered abuse meted out their male counterparts, lack of mentorship and role modelling (Tingle, Warner, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2014), and sexual harassment.

With the issues related to drop-out for all sports officials, organisational support, in the form transparent, implemented policies and education are required to ensure that there is a steady recruitment and retention of sports officials, for without this sport roles there will be no sport.

#### 2.4.4 Training & Development

Sports officials have the responsibility of adjudicating and applying the rules in sport competitions. However the competition environment is constantly changing to make the sport more attractive to the fans and broadcasting, the athletes are getting more and more skilful and the tactics are changing. And, with all of that, the pressure to perform is at an all-time high for all parties. Holding such an integral role in the sport, it is imperative that sports officials are continuously exposed to training efforts, either through organised training programmes, or deliberate practice training (Cunningham, Mergler, & Wattie, 2022). The type of training and its execution will be specific to the sports officiating role, however there must be organisational support and deliberate intent to create a development model, tailored to the sports official's role, for the life cycle of the individual that would support recruitment and encourage persons to remain within the sport (Livingston, et al., 2017).

## 2.5 Summary

There is growing literature on studies surrounding different aspects of the sports official. The literature may not be voluminous in the various aspects that affect the sports official, however it is sufficient and substantial enough to make a statement that this sports role is facing challenges that can affect its sustainability in the sporting landscape if the issues that affect motivation, whether to join, stay or even leave the sporting officiating ranks are not quickly addressed with a viable and deliverable plan of action.

### 3 Methodology

For the purposes of this research, a sport official was defined as someone charged with enforcing the rules and standardizing the competition (i.e. those charged with making critical calls or judgements), as well as those individuals who may be considered secondary officials (i.e. table officials responsible for time keeping, scoring and other event management-related duties) (Livingstone & Forbes, 2016).

#### 3.1 The Survey

Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from the survey built using the online survey software SurveyMonkey™.

The prospective candidates in each test group were asked to complete the respective questionnaires. The questionnaire for sports officials contained forty (40) questions which took an average of nineteen (19) minutes to complete. The questionnaire for national sporting organisations contained twenty-five (25) questions and an average completion time of eleven (11) minutes.

The “Questionnaire for Sports Officials” contained the following headings:

1. Demographics

This section included questions pertaining to the average age, gender and highest level of education achieved of the participants

2. Playing Career

The questions in this grouping were focused on the sports the respondents participated in, the years of experience in the sport and the highest level of competition, as an athlete, in the individual’s main sport

3. Officiating Career

This section looked at the career history of the sports official, how many different sports the individual officiated at, years of experience in the main sport, the highest level of competition the individual officiated at. Additional variables that were considered was the age the individual started and stopped officiating, the workload of the official, and the domestic competition events available for the official to participate in.

4. Training & Development

This section sought to obtain responses from two questions on the training tools and activities that they are or have been exposed to, looking at frequency of training and levels of training available within the National Sporting Organisations.

5. Officiating, Long-term Interest & Participation

The questions within this section was designed to elicit responses from the respondents on the age that they realised their accomplishments or what their career ambitions are in this field. Questions were also asked to list the possible factors or motives for becoming a sports official, continuing in the sport and for leaving the sport.

6. Organisational Support

Respondents were invited to respond on different aspects of the organisation's support and its commitment to them, either through "yes" or "no" responses, or by indicating their level of agreement and disagreement to questions that investigated their opinion of their national sporting organisation.

7. Top 3

This final section of the online survey for sports officials consisted of open-ended qualitative questions that offered the respondents an opportunity to present their opinions on what are the challenges they experience their officiating role and to proffer recommendations on the what improvements in sports officiating in their sport they would like to see.

The National Sporting Organisations (Trinidad & Tobago, Grenada and Barbados), were asked about their perspective on the situation regarding sports officials:

1. Sports Officials Population

This section included questions pertaining to the average lifespan of the sports officials in the sport, gender and age of sports officials.

2. Domestic & International Participation

In this section, the focus was participation of officials at the domestic and international levels

3. Recruitment

This section included questions on how individuals enter as sports officials into the sport and whether the NSO has a dedicated plan for recruitment.

This section also looked at the perceived barriers to entry as an official in the sport and whether NSOs were aware of such barriers and what they can do remove the perceived barriers.

#### 4. Training & Development

In this section, questions were asked around training & development activities – whether they occur, if they are planned, the frequency of such activities and how the training is funded.

#### 5. Organisational Support

This section sought to determine the organisational support for sports officials, whether it is within the National Sporting Organisation or managed by a separate entity.

It also included questions to the NSOs on the motives to stay in the sport, to quit and to suggest strategies that can arrest sports officials' leaving the pastime

### 3.2 Participants

In this research, two groups of candidates were being targeted – the sports officials in the different sports and the National Sporting Organisations (NSO).

Electronic copies of an invitation to participate were circulated to twenty-nine of the thirty-nine affiliates of the Trinidad & Tobago Olympic Committee, of which twenty of the affiliates are Olympic sports, informing them of the survey and requesting that they identify the individual or committee responsible for sports officials within their sporting organisation. This invitation was then followed up by a second electronic invitation which contained a direct link to the survey instruments. A third electronic notification was circulated to the email listing as a reminder to participate in the survey and to share the relevant electronic survey to their sports officials.

The questionnaires (as described above) were distributed by separate electronic communication to:

- i. the appointed NSO representative who would have circulated the survey to the sports official within that sporting fraternity; and
- ii. the NSO



### 3.2.1 Respondents

#### 3.2.1.1 *Sports Officials*

A total of sixty-five (65) sports officials – sixty-four (64) from Trinidad & Tobago and one (1) Barbados from fourteen sports responded to the survey titled “Questionnaire for Sports Officials”. The sports the officials were from were Football, Track & Field, Judo, Hockey, Boxing, Rugby, Netball, Triathlon, canoe / Rowing, Cricket, Martial Arts, Lawn Tennis and Basketball. From this population, the response rate was held at approximately 93% for questions 1 to 10, from questions 11 to 20, the response rate was 74% and from questions 21 – 35, the response rate was 56%.

#### 3.2.1.2 *National Sporting Organisations*

Twelve (12) national sporting federations (Snowsports federation, Gymnastics, Canoeing / Rowing, Rifle, Field Hockey, Football, Netball, Swimming, Triathlon, Yachting, Rugby, Track & Field) from Trinidad & Tobago and two from the Caribbean region (Badminton and Basketball) participated. In the survey. For the questionnaire administered to the National Sporting Organisations (NSOs), the response rate was 55% from question 2 to 24.

### 3.3 Summary

There was fairly good participation in the two surveys. It was observed that the response rate declined to on average 55% for both surveys towards the end of each questionnaire. This can have potential impact on the data trending and can also be considered a limitation to the project; however, it was observed that there were no apparent biases or tendencies in the data reported.

A further limitation observed during the course of the exercise was that some responses led to follow-up questions, which were not catered for within the survey. This can be looked upon as an opportunity for further research in the future.

## 4 Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Data Analysis

The data were collected and analysed utilising the analytical tools in SurveyMonkey™ and Microsoft Excel. The results were evaluated under the categories outlined in the questionnaire of demographics, playing career, officiating career, training & development, long-term interest & participation and organisational support for sports officials; and sports officials populations, recruitment, training & development, organisational support for National Sporting Organisations.

Sixty-six individuals participated in the survey for national sporting organisations from Trinidad & Tobago and Barbados. The responses from the individuals decreased during the course of the survey, hence steadily decreasing the fully completed survey sample size of the respondents to approximately sixty percent of the initial samples size.

For National Sporting Organisations, the complete survey was done by 55% of the participants.

Due to the sample size for both categories of test groups, the statistical reporting is based more on the use descriptive statistics (such as mean and frequency of occurrence).

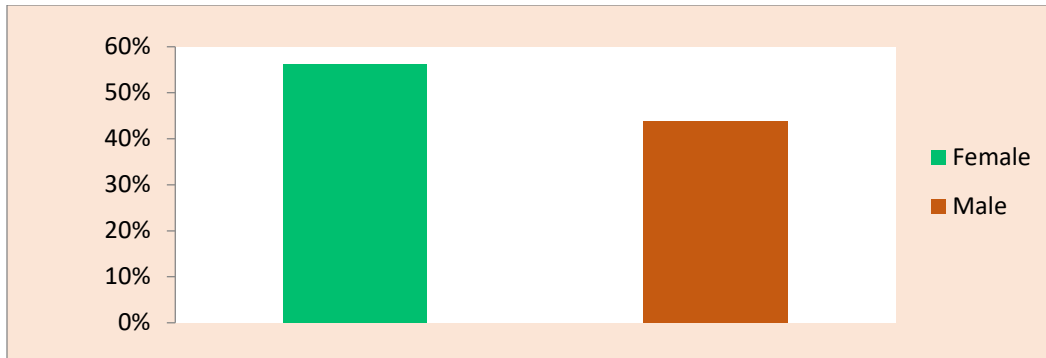
### 4.2 Results

#### 4.2.1 Sports Officials from National Sporting Organisations

##### **Demographics**

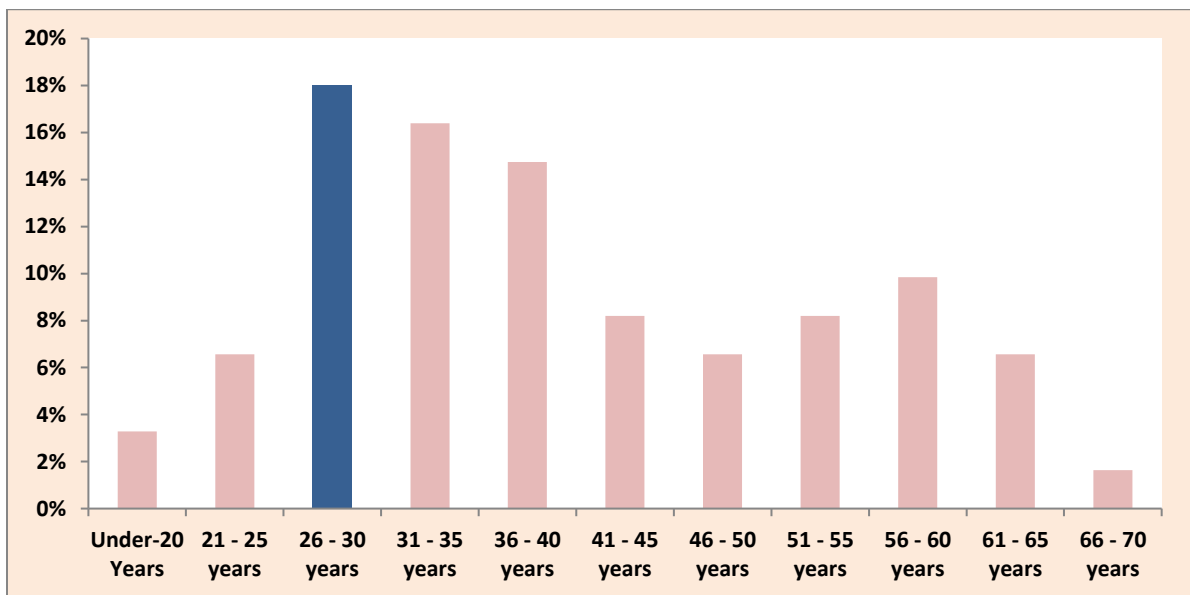
The survey included thirty-eight (38) females and twenty-eight (28) males between the ages of eighteen and seventy years old (Figure 1).

*Figure 1: Participants by Gender*



In assessing the age breakdown, eighteen percent (18%) were in the age grouping of 26-30 years (Figure 2), which represented the highest number in all the age groups present. 16.4% were within the 31 – 35 years age grouping and 14.8% were within the age group of 36-40 years old. Forty-one percent (41%) of the participants were between the ages of 41 and 70 years old.

*Figure 2: Participants by Age Distribution*

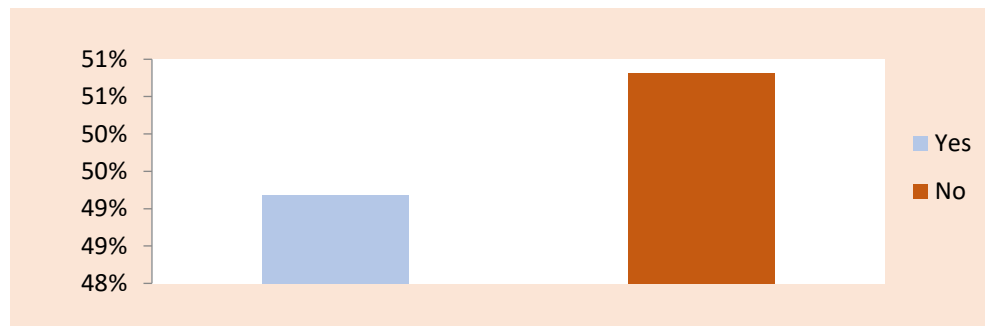


For the education level achieved by the sports officials, 39.1% of the participants possessed under-graduate level education and 31.3% had post-graduate qualification.

### **Playing Career**

Currently 49% of the respondents still participate in the sport that they officiate in, however of the 51% of the respondent that do not currently participate in the sport,

Figure 3: Current Participation in the Sport as an Athlete



98% of them previously participated in the sport as an athlete. Only 2% reported as having no playing history in the sport that they officiate in.

When asked the question on the highest level they have competed at in the sport, 26% of the respondents have competed at the Club level, with 29.5% competing at the international level and 8.2% of the respondents have participated in unsupervised play. Currently 87.9% of the respondents that are active, participate at the club level and 6% compete at the international level.

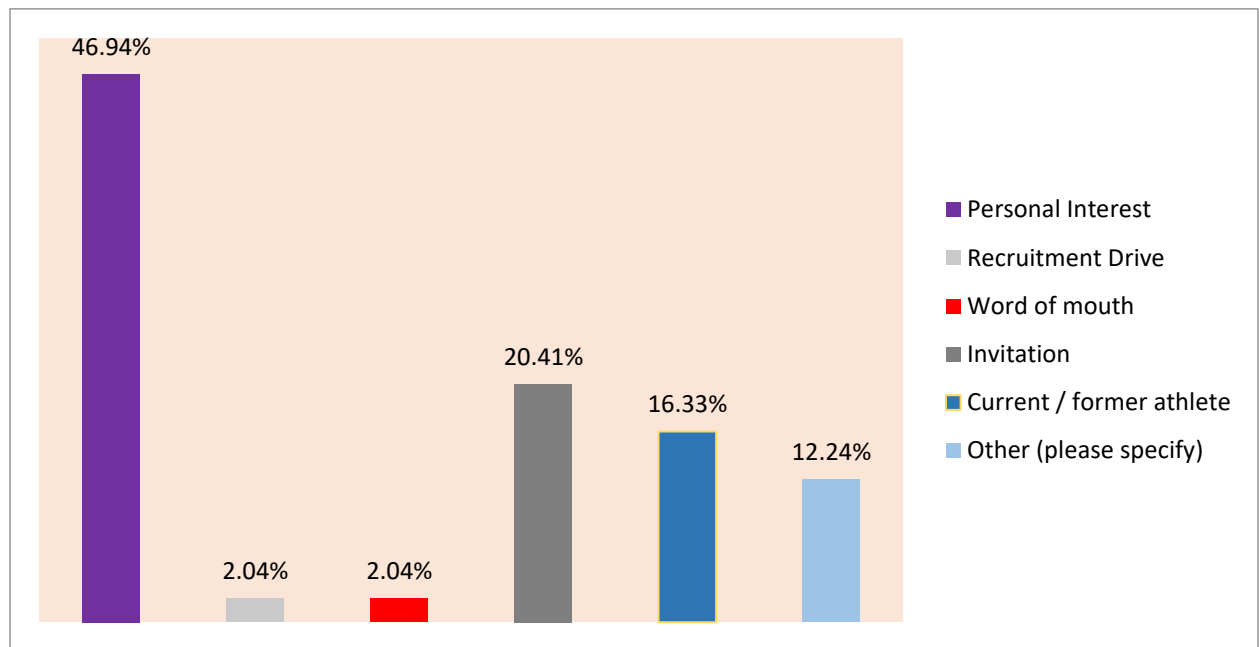
### **Officiating Career**

At this stage of the survey, there were 49 respondents, with 17 individuals skipping from this question and onwards.

From the responses received 2% started officiating at age thirteen (13) years old, with 6.1% of the participants started at fourteen (14) years old. In assessing the data by age groups, it was observed that 41% of the respondents were under the age of twenty years and 39% of the respondents were in the age group 20 – 29 years when they entered the sports official role.

88% of the respondents are still officiating in their primary sport, with 75% continuing to work in their secondary sport as well. The data has however revealed that 6.1% of the respondents within the age group 30 – 39 years have left the sport, with 2% leaving from the age group 40 – 49 and another 6.1% in the age group 50 – 59 age group.

Figure 4: Motives for Entering Officiating



12.24% of the respondents stated that they entered through “Other” avenues, however from the options provided by these respondents, the majority of the comments can either be placed in the category of recruitment or personal interest.

The participants were asked about whether they received financial remuneration (stipend) for officiating. 32.6% of the respondents indicated that they receive a stipend for officiating, 65.2% indicated that they do not receive any stipend for officiating, whilst 2.2% stated that they receive both a stipend and value-in-kind (VIK) benefits. When asked the question about receiving value in kind (VIK) benefits for officiating work, 43.5% stated that they receive some sort of VIK benefits, with 50% of the respondents stating that they do not receive any type of VIK benefit.

For the respondents that received a stipend, they were asked to provide the amount that they receive per match or event. Most of the respondents provided a range and not a specific monetary figure for their response, to which 19% of those respondents indicated that they receive compensation in the range of US\$29 - \$37, with 7% receiving a stipend in the range of US\$15 - \$29 and 9.5% of the respondents receiving a remuneration under US\$15 per competitive activity.

The respondents were asked about the highest level of competition they have officiated at. For the majority of the respondents (61.2%) officiating at the club / national level is the highest that they have reached in their officiating career, 4.1% have officiated in the Caribbean, 20.4% have officiated in the Pan American region and 10% have reached the World level as a sports official.

*Table 1: Level of Officiating of the Participants*

Answer Choices	Responses
<u>Recreational involvement only</u>	4.08%
<u>Officiating at Club level / National Level</u>	61.20
<u>Officiating within Caribbean region</u>	4.08%
<u>Officiating at Pan American region</u>	20.41%
<u>Officiating at World Level</u>	10.20%

When asked further questions on whether they have reached the peak of their officiating career, 71.4% of the respondents believed that they have more to achieve, with 14.3% indicating that they have attained their career peak and 10.2% were indecisive about this. In further determining what the peak of their career would look like, 63.3% or 31 of the 49 respondents stated that this would be officiating at the World Level. For 6.12% of the respondents it would be officiating at the Pan American Level, with 8.2% being content to stay at the domestic level to officiate.

### **Training & Development**

This section focused on training activities within the National Sporting Organisation for the sports officials. 92.6% of the respondents indicated that their NSO provided training for sports

officials, with 7.3% stating that training was not available within their NSO. Respondents were then asked questions as to the level of training provided by their NSOs, along with the frequency of such training and their participation in it. See Tables 1 - 3 below for a summary of the data collected:

Table 2: The Level of Training Offered By National Sporting Organisations.

	Yes	No	N/A - Not Applicable	I do not know
<b>Introductory Level Training</b>	84.21%	2.63%	10.53%	2.63%
<b>Intermediate Level Training</b>	68.42%	13.16%	13.16%	5.26%
<b>Advanced Level Training</b>	50.00%	13.16%	18.42%	18.42%
<b>Continuous Development Programmes</b>	47.37%	21.05%	18.42%	13.16%
<b>Other</b>	7.89%	10.53%	71.05%	10.53%

Table 3: The Frequency of Delivering the Different Training Levels Offered By National Sporting Organisations

	N/A - Not Applicable	Once per year	Twice per year	Once every two years	No set frequency	Never
<b>Introductory Level Training</b>	21.05%	36.84%	15.79%	2.63%	23.68%	0.00%
<b>Intermediate Level Training</b>	31.58%	26.32%	10.53%	2.63%	28.95%	0.00%
<b>Advanced Level Training</b>	44.74%	18.42%	7.89%	5.26%	23.68%	0.00%
<b>Continuous Development Programmes</b>	50.00%	10.53%	7.89%	2.63%	26.32%	2.63%
<b>Other</b>	89.47%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.53%	0.00%

Table 4: The Respondents' Participation at the Training

Yes	No	I do not	N/A - Not
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			know	Applicable
<b>Introductory Level Training</b>	86.84%	2.63%	0.00%	10.53%
<b>Intermediate Level Training</b>	57.89%	21.05%	2.63%	18.42%
<b>Advanced Level Training</b>	36.84%	31.58%	2.63%	28.95%
<b>Continuous Development Programmes</b>	44.74%	15.79%	0.00%	39.47%
<b>Other</b>	5.26%	7.89%	2.63%	84.21%

Participants were asked whether they know if their organisation had a long-term officials development plan, to which 35.1% of the respondents stated “yes”, 27% stated “no” and 37.8% indicated that they did not know of such a plan for sports officials.

### **Officiating, Long-term Interest & Participation**

This section focused on factors surrounding interest and participation as an official.

Participants were asked to provide reasons for persevering and remaining as a sports official within their sport. The responses that were returned were captured under the following categories:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| i. To understand the sport                                | ix. For the incentives – travel, financial         |
| ii. Personal achievement / accomplishment                 | x. To remain within the sport                      |
| iii. To remain physically fit                             | xi. Fame & glory                                   |
| iv. An opportunity to represent one's country             | xii. To mentor new officials                       |
| v. To officiate at the highest level / career advancement | xiii. Fun and Enjoyment                            |
| vi. For the passion / love of the sport                   | xiv. Children and family are involved in the sport |
| vii. For social support, comradery, kinship               | xv. Social mobility                                |
| viii. To give back to the sport                           | xvi. Recognition                                   |
|   | xvii. To develop the sport and officiating         |

Some 42% of the respondents indicated that they have remained in the sport for reasons related to career advancement / officiating at the highest level, with the second highest reason being for the passion / love of the sport (36.8%) followed with 23.7% of the respondents remaining in the sport as an official as an opportunity to give back to the sport.

Participants were asked whether they knew of sports officials that have left the sport and what they believe could be the possible reasons for quitting the sport. Over 70% of the respondents indicated that

they were not aware of persons quitting the sport, with approximately 25% indicating that they were aware of one or more persons leaving the sports role.

Participants were asked to suggest possible reasons for quitting as a sports official. The responses are listed below:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| i. Age / retirement   | ix. Covid-19 era  |
| ii. Family commitment   | x. Change in interests / lack of interest in officiating        |
| iii. Falling fitness levels / injuries  | xi. Death   |
| iv. Abuse from spectators, coaches, players                                       | xii. Lack of progression / advancement as a sports official     |
| v. Lack of financial or value-in-kind incentives                                  | xiii. Dissatisfied with appointments (domestic & international) |
| vi. Poor treatment from the National Association / National Sporting Organisation | xiv. No recognition   |
| vii. Job conflict / commitments   | xv. Payment issues / low remuneration                           |
| viii. Burnout   | xvi. Cost / expense to operate as an official                   |

For the reasons cited by the participants, abuse by spectators, coaches and players was ranked number one, with 26.3% of the respondents stating this reason, followed by change / lack of interest with 18.4% of the respondents providing this as a reason.

### **Organisational Support**

Participants were asked questions surrounding the knowledge of the operations of their respective sporting organisations. The questions pertained to the sporting officials positioning within the sporting organisation, long-term officials development / career pathways and the reporting of abuse to sports officials. The results are presented in the table below.

*Table 5: Administrative Arrangements and Responsibility of Sports Officials within NSOs*

Answer Choices	Responses		
	Does your National Sporting Organisation have a sub-committee or an individual that oversees the development and management of sports officials?	Does the organisation have a long term officials development plan (career pathway and progression)?	Does the organisation provide an avenue to make a complaint against abuse for club officials and players?
<b>Yes</b>	94.59%	35.14%	70.27%
<b>No</b>	0.00%	27.03%	10.81%
<b>I do not know</b>	5.41%	37.84%	0.00%
<b>N/A - Not Applicable</b>	0.00%	0.00%	18.92%

Participants were then asked for their thoughts on whether they felt that their work was valued as a sports official, whether the organisation took pride in their accomplishments as sports officials and whether the National Sporting organisation cared about the sports officials' general satisfaction at officiating. A summary of the results are in the tables below.

*Table 6: Perceived Organisational Support*

Answer Choices	Responses		
	Does the organisation value the contribution of sports officials to the sport	The organisation cares about my general satisfaction at officiating work.	Does the organisation take pride in the accomplishments of its sports officials?
<b>Strongly agree</b>	24.32%	5.41%	24.32%
<b>Agree</b>	40.54%	43.24%	45.95%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	27.03%	40.54%	24.32%
<b>Disagree</b>	2.70%	8.11%	2.70%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5.41%	2.70%	2.70%

### **Top 3**

Participants were asked to list their top three challenges sports officials encountered in their sport and to list three improvements they would like to see in their sport with regards to officiating.

*Table 7: Challenges and Improvements to Sports Officiating*

	Challenges of Sports Officials	Recommended Improvements
i.	Security	Better Training Facilities
ii.	Lack of training	More training equipment
i.	Lack of compensation (cash / in kind)	More respect for female officials
ii.	Lack of medical support for injury / recovery	Medical attention / support for sports officials (inclusive of psychological support)
iii.	Lack of access to national sporting facilities / sports professionals to train	Access to training facilities
iv.	Abuse	Improved financial compensation
v.	Lack of recruitment / young people in the avocation	Use of Technology
vi.	Lack of organisational / administrative support	Make officiating more attractive and marketable
vii.	Lack of attention	Introduce incentives
viii.	Work-life / sport balance; job conflict	Awareness of officiating to the general public
ix.	Lack of respect	Professionalise Officiating, eg. benefits & insurance
x.	Lack of Uniforms for sports officials	Decentralize training of referees (sport specific)
xi.	Sexual harassment of female officials	Uniforms for Sports officials
xii.	Limited venues for competition	Reduction in harassment of female officials
xiii.	Limited access to tournaments / exposure	Respect for officials
xiv.	No interest shown by young persons	Security
xv.	Absence of officials to games	Increase in social activities for sports officials / fun / enjoyment
xvi.	Burnout	Improved / increased administrative management
xvii.	Lack of social connection	Promote officiating as an alternative in sports to active play or administration / management
xviii.	Lack of year-round practice as an officials (sports-specific)	Increase in competitions for more officiating opportunities
xix.	Limited promotion of other avenues within sport	Recruitment of individuals
xx.	Attrition	Improved communication on sports official career pathways
xxi.	Decreased motivation	-
xxii.	Lack of training on “soft” skills	-
xxiii.	Poor communication on development pathways	-

#### 4.2.2 National Sporting Organisations

A survey instrument was also issued to National Sporting Organisations to obtain information on the demographics of the sports official population, data on the development plans within NSOs and their viewpoint on the participation and interest of sporting officials.

The representatives who completed the survey instrument were either an executive member of the NSO or were appointed by the NSO's executive to respond to the questionnaire.

Responses were received for fifteen participants from twelve national sporting organisation. Of the twelve NSOs that responded, ten were Olympic sports and two were commonwealth sports.

#### **Sports Official Population**

From the respondents of the twelve National Sporting Federations, none was able to respond properly to this question and present the number of sports officials, and by extension the number of female and male sports officials. When asked about the duration sports officials would remain in officiating, 44% of the NSO respondents indicated 16 – 20years.

#### **Domestic & International Participation**

Respondents were asked about participation of their sports officials at Caribbean, Pan American and World level sporting events. 62.5% of the NSO respondents indicated they have officials operating at the Caribbean level sporting events, 25% stated that they have sports officials operating at the Pan American Level and 50% of the NSO respondents have officials at the World Level. Respondents were also asked about the number of officials operating at each category of international events and the amount by gender.

*Table 8: Number of Sports Official Operating at the Different Category of International Events.*

	0		1		2		3	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Caribbean Level</b>	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	12.50%	37.50%	12.50%	0.00%
<b>Pan American Level</b>	100.00%	37.50%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>World Level</b>	87.50%	37.50%	12.50%	37.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

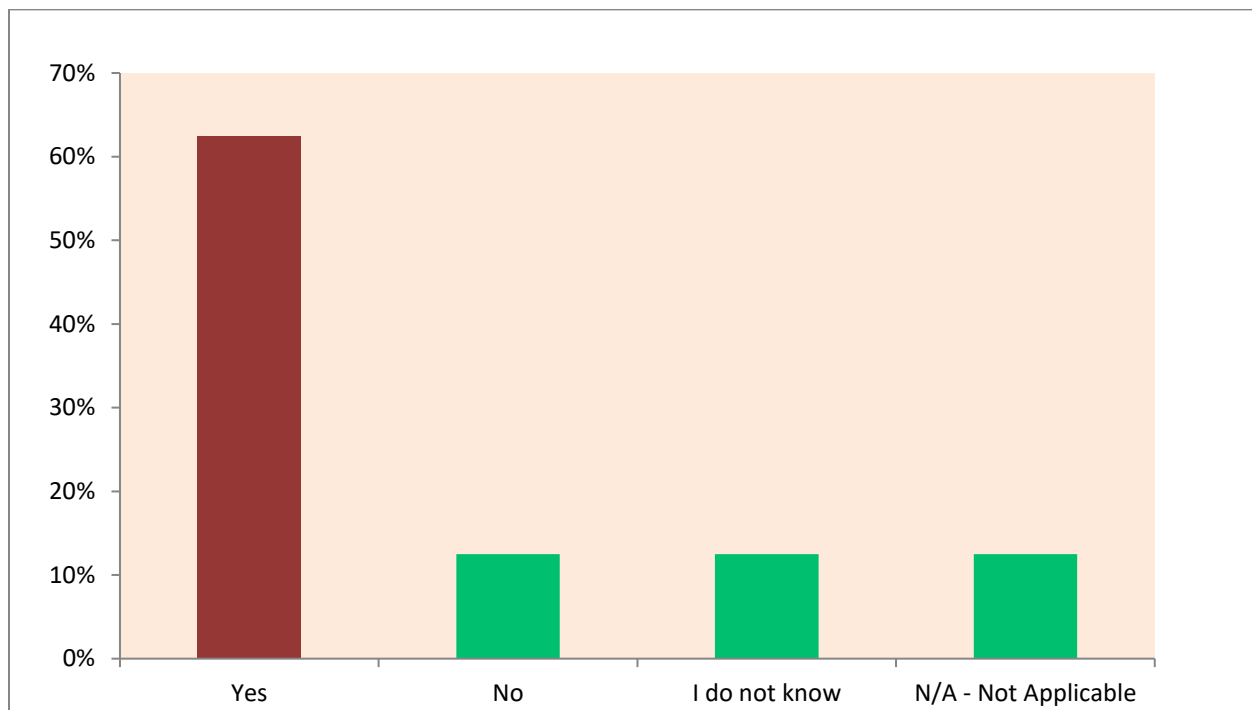
### **Recruitment**

The participants were asked to identify the manner which individuals became sports officials in their NSOs. The common responses were:

- i. Coaches / athletes that turned to sports officials
- ii. Parents of athletes
- iii. NSO executive members
- iv. Volunteers

When asked about a recruitment plan for the National Sporting Organisation, the participants responded as followed (See Figure 5).

*Figure 6: Awareness of Recruitment Plan for National Sporting Organisations*



When asked whether as an NSO they were aware of perceived barriers for entry of individuals into the role of sports officials, 55.6% of the respondents stated “yes”, whilst 33.% responded “no” and 11.1%

stated that they “did not know”. Participants were also asked to list what they thought were barriers to entry as a sports official in the sport. The responses were as follows:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| i. Persons being unable to commit time due to work and family obligations   | officials that you have control of game situations;  |
| ii. The difficulty in obtaining (gun) permits (sports specific)   | vii. Communication - Being able to explain briefly, your decisions to a Team Captain or Coach;   |
| iii. Knowledge of the game of Rugby - some players were never properly coached on all facets of the game (sports specific); | viii. Fitness - In order to stay with play, you need to be fit;  |
| iv. Knowledge of the Laws of the Game - some players have never seen a Law Book or read any extracts;                       | ix. Travel - a good referee can find that they are travelling regularly locally or overseas. Some people don't handle travelling too well;   |
| v. Being able to make decisions on infringements. The incidents during a game, at times can be too fast to process;         | x. No payment for matches completed - Current members are considered volunteers. Rugby referees used to be paid a stipend per match or Tournament. Referees have not been paid for more than 10 years. |
| vi. Self-confidence - Communicating via body language to players and other  |  |

### **Training & Development**

Participants were asked whether the NSO has a development plan for sports officials. 37.5% of the NSO respondents responded in the positive, with 37.5% of the NSO respondents said “no”. 12.5% stated that they “did not know” and 12.5% indicated that it was not applicable to their sport. Participants were also asked about the level of training offered to individuals operating as sports officials.

*Table 9: Categories of Training Offered by NSOs*

Level of Training	Yes	No	I do not know	N/A - Not applicable
<b>Introductory</b>	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Intermediate</b>	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Advanced</b>	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Other</b>	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%	62.50%

Listed as “Other”, the training offered, were: (i) Coach of Match Officials and (ii) Educator of Match Officials – Level 1 and Level 2. The NSO participants were asked about the frequency of training in the different categories (Table 10).

*Table 10: The Frequency of Training*

Level of Training	N/A - Not Applicable	Once per year	Twice per year	Once every two years	No set frequency
<b>Introductory</b>	12.50%	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%	50.00%
<b>Intermediate</b>	25.00%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%	37.50%
<b>Advanced</b>	25.00%	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%	37.50%
<b>Other</b>	87.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%

The NSO participants were asked about the attendance at the training and the ratio of male to female attendees. See Tables 11 and 12.

*Table 11: The Attendance Levels at the Training Courses offered*

Level of Training	0	1 - 5 Persons	6 - 10 Persons	11 - 15 Persons	16 - 20 Persons	21 - 25 Persons
<b>Introductory</b>	12.50%	25.00%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	25.00%
<b>Intermediate</b>	25.00%	50.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Advanced</b>	25.00%	62.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Other</b>	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

*Table 12: Proportion of male and female in attendance at each attendance*

Level of Training	0 - 10		11 - 20		21 - 30		41 - 50		61 - 70	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Introductory</b>	37.50%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%
<b>Intermediate</b>	50.00%	50.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Advanced</b>	75.00%	50.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%



With training activities for sports officials, NSO participants were asked how is the training funded, to which 37.5% indicated that it is self-funded (by the individual), 25% indicated that the NSO sponsors the training activity, 12.5% indicated that training activities are grant supported and 25% indicated that his was not applicable to their NSO.

### **Organisational Support**

Participants were asked about whether the administrative responsibility for the sports officials lay with the NSOs. 87.50% of the respondents indicated that the responsibility lay within the NSO and the other 12.5% of the respondents stated that it did not. On further questioning, persons who indicated “no” listed the entity that had responsibility for the sports officials. The responses were as followed:

- i. Trinidad & Tobago Rugby Referees Association, which is an affiliate of the Trinidad & Tobago Rugby Football Union and an entity acknowledged within the constitution
- ii. Trinidad & Tobago Referees Department

For the NSOs that responded “yes”, the sports officials fell under the responsibility of a committee (Technical) or a position on the NSO’s executive boards.

Participants were asked to provide responses on what they perceived would keep sports officials motivated in this avocation. The respondents provided the following responses:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| i. Seeing the growth of sport and athletes                                   | vii. Their focus on enhancing the sport holistically.   |
| ii. showing progress at international games                                  | viii. Development of the sport  |
| iii. financial incentives  | ix. Public Service  |
| iv. more room for educational growth   | x. Comradery within the sporting fraternity of Rugby  |
| v. Having events that warrant their participation                            | xi. Understand and appreciating their roles with regards to a positive contribution towards the Sports and its development. |
| vi. Development of the sport, achievements of players, passion for the sport | xii. Love of the sport and a desire to excel  |

When asked about the numbers of sports officials that left the avocation within the past five years, 25% of respondents said 1 - 4.

When asked to provide the reasons for the drop out, the respondents proffered the following:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. "Four members left for varying reasons over the last five years. This unfortunately is a regular occurrence but mostly with older match officials who can no longer maintain fitness levels, recognise that being a match official is not what they thought it would be or find themselves doing lower level matches or performing a supportive role."</li> <li>ii. Lack of recognition, lack of appreciation or motivational incentives to continue</li> <li>iii. "This information is not easily available. In most cases it's just a matter of having served out their time, or refocusing their attention on other matters (e.g personal issues)."</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. They may have personal issues which are valid.</li> <li>v. bad governance by the NSO</li> <li>vi. "I assessed this as loss of interest and focus on work career or on family life."</li> <li>vii. "Involvement with Rugby is generally voluntary and sometimes, lack of opportunity, lack of success or non-recognition by peers and others outside of the sport can wear negatively on some persons."</li> <li>viii. Those who left was as a result of illness and the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic</li> <li>ix. Selfish desires</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

The strategies suggested by the NSO respondent that can encourage the retention and motivation of sports officials within their sport included:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Proper Goal Settings.</li> <li>ii. Team building exercises.</li> <li>iii. Financial Incentives</li> <li>iv. changing priorities and health challenges</li> <li>v. Put in place contingencies to mitigate factors such as the one highlighted.</li> <li>vi. Involvement of the Officials in the development and understanding of rules</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vii. Match stipend or Per Diem for match officials;</li> <li>viii. More Training and Certification courses;</li> <li>ix. Improved funding to help send more referees overseas for training;</li> <li>x. Better marketing of the Referees Society - Who we are; What do we do, What we can offer ex-players, etc.</li> <li>xi. Introduction of the new Grading System which allows a referee to see what</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

Level they are at and what they need to do to advance.

- xii. Continuous Recruitment
- xiii. Communication

## 5 Discussion

The purpose of this research was to develop a picture of the officiating landscape in Trinidad & Tobago, looking at the recruitment element, development and pathways progression, the sports officials' motivation to remain committed to and the desire quit the role. The perspectives obtained were through the lenses of the practitioner, the sports official and of the National Sporting Organisation.

### 5.1 The Officiating Population

A key research question was the demographic composition of sports officials with the sports supported by the Trinidad & Tobago Olympic Committee. It was evident that there was zero to limited data on the demographics of the sports officials population at the lower levels within the different sporting organisations. To present a clearer picture on the demographics of this population, more information was gleaned from the sample group of sports officials surveyed to determine the possible age grouping and gender composition of this group, along with educational levels. From the individual participants surveyed, the data indicated that whilst the 26 – 30 years old had the largest percent, the population of sports officials sampled is an aging one with 41% of the persons interviewed were within the age group 41 to 70 years old. This data gives possible insights as to the actuality of the sports officials' population.

Most sports were able to produce accurate data on the elite-level officials (individuals operating at the Caribbean, Pan American and World levels) primarily because the pool of sports officials at this level is small and the data can be easily obtained and tracked.

The data collected portrayed a somewhat balanced situation amongst the genders in this avocation. However, there was a prevalence of the female attendance at the training activities, especially from intermediate level and onwards, and this has manifested itself when it comes to participation of officials at the international levels (Caribbean, Pan American and World Levels) with there being more females than males within this category. This data represented strides within this avocation towards the

presence of women in sport leadership positions. It has also presented the unfortunate situation of sexual harassment and lack of respect for female officials within the officiating field and for some a motive for them to quit the field of officiating.

## 5.2 Retention, Development Pathways and Commitment

Most NSOs reported that they have a recruitment plan for the organisation however as a limitation to this study, further investigation into the aspects of the recruitment plan was not done. It was observed that from both the NSOs and individual participant's responses, most sports officials that enter the officiating role were or are currently athletes in the sport and from the manner that they entered sports officiating, they appeared to be intrinsically motivated as they became involved because of personal interest. The formal recruitment process by NSOs appeared not to attract many of the participants of the survey, as there was a low response to this option. Persons who came on board via invitation from a practicing sports official bore significant returns for the NSO, as through that route there was a significant response from the participants.

Sports officials entered the avocation through different avenues, but the data obtained from the participants of two surveys showed the need for National Sporting Organisations to create a sustained, organised recruitment strategy to ensure that there are always persons within the pipeline for the sustainability of this group. Along with this focused recruitment strategy must be the execution of a training & development plan with clearly communicated pathways for officials on the domestic scene and even into the international arena. According to the research conducted, the sport role of officiating requires promotion and marketing as a means to attract and recruit individuals, but also as an indirect way to place recognition on this voluntary role. Sports officials are the third team, the invisible team, and from the data obtained, it is believed that the recognition obtained from promotion could be a means for sports officials to be appreciated.

The data obtained on the sport-playing history of the participants was important as it supported of the passion and love the current sports officials have for the sport, along with the desire to "give back" to the sport. This thread came out consistently when asked why they remain in the sport. The transition from youth to senior athlete and then onto a non-playing role in the sport in most instances demonstrate commitment and dedication. Virtues that are desirous in any voluntary role. Many

individuals when they enter this role would not have been privy to the negative attributes associated with being a sports official, such as the stress, the burnout, the injuries, the abuse and lack of recognition, to list a few. These negative attributes were listed as possible motivations for sports officials to quit, along with lack of incentives (cash and value-in-kind) or poor compensation, lack of recognition and appreciation, unclear development path and poor organisational support to name a few. From the data obtained by National Sporting Organisations, “age-ing out” was listed as the reason for sports officials to leave officiating. This is not surprising as in the majority of the instances, officiating is a voluntary activity and persons remain in the avocation because they are internally motivated by higher values and virtues.

“Job commitments” and “work/life-sport balance” were highlighted by many as a motivator to quit the sport and with further research, the root cause of this problem could be ascertained. The author could only opine based on the data obtained on the demographics, officials’ population size and the volume of competition per week that with small populations of sports officials within the different sports and also with officials being absent for their carded events, these individuals possibly spend an inordinate amount of time on their weekends at pitches, courts and tracks during the sports season officiating events, leaving little time for family activities, performing off-duty job tasks or even getting rest. This perceived lack of personal time and the struggle to maintain a healthy balance amongst sport, work and life can bring to the fore motives leading to quitting such as lack of appreciation by the organisation and the active components of the sport (athletes, coaches), lack of compensation and heightened sensitivities when it comes to misconduct of players and coaches.

Of concern was the amount of instances “abuse” and “lack of respect” were cited as being a motivator to quit the sport. This was a common theme amongst the different officiating groups (judges, umpires, referees, time-keepers, marshals, etc) that operate within the public’s glare or behind the scenes. For most NSOs, the respondents have reported that they are aware there is an avenue to report these infractions, however from the recommendations presented by the respondents on how to improve officiating, it can be inferred that more is required to staunch the negative behaviours exhibited by spectators, coaches and athletes – repeated recommendations for “respect for female officials”, “respect for officials”, “more administrative management” even “make officiating a profession” can be

considered a call not just for recognising officials, but on sensitising other stakeholders as to the proper conduct around officials.

Of interest would be to determine at what stage or stages within the sports officials' career did they exit officiating. From the data obtained, the majority of the respondents had 16 to 20 years' experience within the field, demonstrating longevity and commitment to the avocation, however, knowledge of the stage in the lifecycle individuals exited, aside from natural reasons, would aid decision-makers and NSOs in how to approach the issue of attrition. Further research on this topic could investigate this matter.

Each sport is constantly evolving to meet the demands of delivering an exciting and dynamic spectacle for a changing demographic, for TV and to maintain its currency and relevancy as a main sport. The visible impact of this is on the coaching methods (technical and tactical) and with that the changes in the approach to the "game" from a mental and physical aspect to the players and coaches. Whilst resources for development are inputted for the players and coaches to meet the needs of the changing games, it appears that National Sporting Organisation forget (or neglect) that these changes to the "game" also impact on the sports officials, at all levels, as they have to officiate and adjudicate in this "new" and changing environment. As such they too must be equipped to appropriately manage the coaches, athletes and the changing tactics of the sport. National Sporting Organisations must recognise this and prepare sports officials for this new era in sports. For sports officials (for example referees, umpires), where physical activity and fitness are key requirements for their roles, recovery and rehabilitation, access to training facilities and sports professionals in the preparation stage, along with more year-round competition or access to competition to improve their skills are to be factored into their development plan. These themes came out when participants were asked on the challenges officials encounter and the improvements they would like to see in the sport. With the increased professionalising of sports or the expectations that the official should be a "professional", more organisational support mechanisms should be incorporated into any development plan for sports officials.

Training programmes for sports officials within the region are seen to be ad hoc in most instances, with no set schedule or frequency for training at the different levels. However, much of the focus of the

training was for career progression and advancement. Very little mention was made by the participants on continuous development programmes or other auxiliary training activities. Evidence of other support systems, like mentoring or buddy systems, were not mentioned by the participants as being offered by the NSOs. Some participants considered the lack of attention as a being a motive to drop out and there were recommendation to have training on the “softer skills”. These two points identified by participants led to the belief that NSOs are relying on the individual’s innate character and personality traits to manage interpersonal situations (eg. conflict and abuse) and even to coach themselves. Movement away from training for (career) advancement and focus on training for development is needed, as this would focus not only on the complex nature of officiating, with its plethora of rules, regulations and protocols but on assisting the sports officials to manage inter and intra-personal relationships, teams and stress which are inherent to sports officiating. Included in such a programme would be a feedback component and a support mechanism, which would fulfil the social support and connection motive for entering and remaining within the avocation. The design of such a programme – long-term athlete development (Forbes, Wattie, Cunningham, & Livingston, 2020)– would assist in not only providing the training that is required for career progression and advancement and the holistic development of the sports official but should assist in reducing the numbers that are dropping out from the sport because of the lack of preparation to deal with personnel issues.

For many of the participants of this survey, the altruistic values, such as “giving back to the sport”, “love of the sport” and social values like fun, enjoyment, social support and connectedness have played a prominent role in attracting and keeping individuals within the officiating profession. Activities that can engender these values will not only satisfy sports officials, but it would also give the appreciation and recognition that seems to be lacking from stakeholders within the sport.

### 5.3 Relatability to Academic Research

The research has highlighted that there are striking similarities between the officiating situation in Trinidad & Tobago and what has been documented in academic research. The predominant demographic that enters this avocation has been shown to be consistent from the research and the cited literature, participants in the sport, who have transitioned to other roles within sport (Snyder, 1983), (Mergler, 2020). It has been either personal interest or encouragement by another sports official (Livingston, et al., 2017) that the majority of participants entered into the sports officiating arena. From

the literature, the motives for entering the sport such as community involvement, and love of the sport (Kim, 2018) and the rationale for their continued involvement based primarily on intrinsic motivation (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, 2015) were no different from the data captured from the participants.

The numbers dropping out from the officiating ranks locally are not large, nor does it appear to be as frequent, however for a small population pool, the effects and the impact can be considered to be on the same scale as our developed country counterparts. This literature indicates that drop out is not unique (Livingston, et al., 2017) and that it is a pervasive and persistent problem with a cost attached to it (Cuskelly & Hoyer, 2013). The reasons provided by the participants were no different than what was cited in the literature: poor training, lack of perceived organisational support, abuse, burnout (Livingston, et al., 2017), (Tingle, Warner, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2014). However the level of importance assigned to the reasons for quitting would differ between the two groups primarily due to the socio-cultural differences and accessibility to resources.

The recommendations provided by the participants on how to improve officiating locally do not vary significantly from what academic research has proffered. Multi-faceted approach of training and development (Cunningham, Mergler, & Wattie, 2022), the implementation of the concept of long-term athlete development (Mergler, 2020), improved compensation (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, 2015) and improved organisational support (Cuskelly & Hoyer, 2013) were some of the recommendations presented by the participants.

#### 5.4 Summary of Findings

From the research conducted the following findings can be surmised:

1. Improved record keeping of sports officials is required by National Sporting Organisations. This would assist in tracking their lifespan, milestones and experiences within the field and would assist National Sporting Organisations in strategic planning activities.
2. Individuals are interested and are entering the field of officiating, a more focused recruitment strategy is required from the NSOs, as it appears they have little involvement in the process. As part of the development plan for officials (refer to point 3), all new entrants, regardless of the



manner of entry should participate in an orientation programme which would include on-boarding and basic level training to officiating. This would assist with tracking new entrants, and it would be the first step in preparing the entrants on what officiating entails.

3. A more comprehensive and holistic approach to the development of sports officials is required. This development process should look at sports-specific officiating training, coupled with people management training and self-awareness training, role-modelling / mentoring and performance management.
4. More organisational support is needed in stamping out abuse and lack of respect meted out to officials (male and females). There needs to be condemnation of this behaviour, visible support to the officials, and introduction of sensitization / awareness programmes to stakeholders (coaches, spectators, athletes) and even sports officials on proper conduct.
5. Though it is evident that persons are interested in entering this field, there is still a need to promote and market the avocation of officiating. There are multiple benefits to marketing sports officiating: it will, to name a few:
  - a. attract more individuals to enter the field;
  - b. assist in easing the workload for the few that perform the job; and
  - c. it places recognition and prominence on the role.
6. Funnel more resources (financial, facilities, etc) to this avocation, to assist with development and performance.

## 6 Conclusion

This research paper has looked at the officiating landscape primarily in Trinidad & Tobago. There have been some limitations to the research and topics that have emanated from the research that can to be explored further to provide more data to NSOs and other stakeholders that would assist in development of this avocation.

From the research conducted and the data collected, where do we go from here? There is immediate no “fix’ to the situation, but gradual approach to improving the local officiating situation should be adopted. As such, emanating from this course of study is an action plan which will be presented to the NOC and the participating National Sporting Organisations. The action plan would address the findings from the research and develop a suitable but manageable action that NSOs can incorporate into their business.

## 6.1 Action Plan

No.	Finding	Recommendation	Date	Who
1.	Limited data on the sports officials operating within the different sports	1. Create an updated database, which will have the sports official career profile and maintain it	2023 March 30 <sup>th</sup>	National Sporting Organisation
2.	A disorganised, inconsistent recruitment strategy by NSOs	1. Conduct an assessment of the possible target groups e.g. former athletes, parents, youth athletes, general population, etc. 2. For each possible target group, develop a group specific strategy to introduce the stakeholder into sports officiating 3. Develop a frequency or realistic timetable to conduct recruitment exercises	2023 March 30 <sup>th</sup>	National Sporting Organisation
3.	Lack of awareness of what the role entails	1. Create and develop the on-boarding experience for new recruits. This is part of the development experience. It is an opportunity to have persons aware of what they are becoming a part of, especially as they are volunteers	2023 October 30 <sup>th</sup>	National Sporting Organisation
4.	Abuse, sexual harassment, burn-out were listed as possible motivators for sports officials to drop out.	1. Development and enforcement sport-specific code of conduct, which should include clauses for handling misbehaviour against sports officials 2. Awareness and sensitization sessions for the sporting public, participants on acceptable behaviour and conduct towards sports officials.	2023 October 30 <sup>th</sup>	National Sporting Organisation / TTOC
5.	Ad hoc training programmes for sports	1. Change how training is done. Adopt a	2023December	National Sporting

No.	Finding	Recommendation	Date	Who
	officials / not keeping abreast of the changing environment of sport and the other components within it.	<p>holistic approach constructing a comprehensive sports official education programme that can take an individual systematically through the different development stages.</p> <p>The sports specific elements would be required to be included e.g fitness (if the role requires running type of activity. This may entail fitness programme, fitness testing, event recovery work.); mental preparation</p> <p>To also be considered in this development map should be a practical element which would include, but not limited to mentoring, shadowing</p>	30 <sup>th</sup>	Organisation

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## 8 Appendix

8.1 [Questionnaire for Sports Officials \(Trinidad & Tobago\)](#)

8.2 [Questionnaire for Caribbean Sports Officials \(Barbados\)](#)

8.3 [Questionnaire for National Sporting Organisations](#)

8.4 [Questionnaire for Caribbean National Sporting Organisations](#)