

FEPSAC Position Statement # 10

Culturally competent practice in sport and exercise psychology

Preface

FEPSAC supports the development sport and exercise psychology from a European perspective. Europe embraces different countries and cultures as well as multiculturalism within each country. Sport and exercise psychology practitioners (SEPPs) work in diverse contexts, and this necessitates acknowledgement and respect for cultural differences in applied practice. In the following. guidelines for conducting culturally competent practice in sport and exercise psychology are outlined according to eight principles. These principles ensure SEPPs' interactions and services will be conducted with dignity and concern for the welfare of all groups, organisations, and individuals involved. The terms "culture", "multiculturalism", and "diversity" in this document are used in a broad sense, encompassing aspects of identity related to age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnic heritage, language, disability, socioeconomic status, education, level of achievement, religious/spiritual orientation, and other cultural dimensions.

The goals of these guidelines are:

- 1) to emphasize the importance of multicultural awareness and inclusion of diverse client groups in sport and exercise psychology services;
- 2) to provide SEPPs with basic guidelines and key points in working with culturally diverse populations.

Note that these guidelines should be followed in accordance with FEPSAC's ethical principles and existing national guidelines or recommendations.

Principle 1: Increase self-awareness of one's cultural background and of one's professional interactions

Sport and exercise psychology, just like any other branch of psychology, is characterised by interactions between individuals or groups that represent unique cultural contexts. SEPPs enter into professional interactions with their own cultural background and identities, which encompass heritage, ethnicity, nationality, religious/spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and intrapsychic cultural representations, such as beliefs, attitudes,

values, biases, assumptions, and stereotypes of others and themselves. SEPPs therefore are encouraged to be aware of their own cultural context (e.g., of their own culturally constituted beliefs, values, attitudes, and philosophical assumptions) and its potential representation in their behaviour and interactions.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that above-mentioned cultural representations are not always apparent. Stereotypes, biases, attitudes, beliefs, and other phenomena are often unconscious and automatic. These unconscious phenomena can become more apparent by means of self-reflection and self-awareness.

SEPPs should be cognizant that, as any other human being, he or she might be prone to categorizing people, and to assigning stereotypical attributes to certain categories. Another danger is a tendency to favour in-group members over out-group members. SEPPs should seek to decrease the negative effect that categorization might have on professional interactions.

Principle 2: Be conscious of your client's cultural context

SEPPs should be aware of the cultural background of their clients in so far as the client is willing to disclose. As stated, these backgrounds shape client–practitioner interactions, as well as client expectations and behaviours. In some cases, miscommunications or misunderstandings may result when practitioner and client do not share the same cultural backgrounds. These differences can influence clients' program adherence, their emotional, cognitive and behavioural reactions, and many other aspects of the client–practitioner interaction. SEPPs who are aware of the unique experiences that a client's cultural context embraces, can better manage these reactions and ensure more effective interactions. Cultural competence starts with considering athletes, exercisers, coaches, and sport psychology professionals as cultural beings with distinctive and individual, but contextually determined, backgrounds and experiences.

Principle 3: Adopt multicultural approaches and appreciate human diversity

SEPPs should adopt multicultural approaches, acknowledge cultural differences and appreciate diversity. This can be achieved by increasing contact with certain groups or seeing clients as individuals rather than as members of a group. This should be followed by an effort to familiarize oneself with different cultural aspects through enhancing knowledge, skills and competencies aimed to increase mutual understanding and make professional interactions more effective. Efforts should be invested in creating culturally safe athletic environments in which athletes can freely express, instead of suppress, aspects of their identity.

Principle 4: Engage in continuing education to enhance understanding and development of competencies related to multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion

SEPPs are encouraged to recognize ways that culture can shape an individual's world view. In line with the principle "competence" among the FEPSAC Ethics Principles, which states that practitioners and researchers should maintain the highest standards in their work and engage in ongoing education, practitioners are called upon to increase their knowledge about culturally different groups and to further develop their understanding of psychological consequences and possible concerns that cultural background brings. This includes, but is not limited to, an understanding of issues of concealment, intolerance, discrimination, oppression, devaluation, and social inequalities brought about by ethnicity/national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religious/ spiritual preferences, disability, etc.

Understanding cultural heritage and background can help increase understanding of the ways in which clients present themselves, react to, and behave in certain situations. An extension of knowledge, development of culture-centred skills and non-traditional methods can broaden the practitioner's skill set and ensure more effective interactions. Focusing exclusively on a majority-centred world view might limit work with other cultural groups due to mislabelling or misdiagnosing problems and interventions.

Therefore, SEPPs are encouraged to invest in developing cultural competency. This can be accomplished by increasing cultural knowledge (e.g., understanding cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, and cultural praxis as well as other paradigms), and training cultural skills (e.g., cultural reflexivity, culturally informed communication, and interventions).

Principle 5: Be sensitive to clients' linguistic requirements

Relevant information provided to clients should be presented in a way that is most convenient to the individual or group client. Above all, this refers to the language in which communications are conducted. FEPSAC Ethics Principles also includes "consent", which requires researchers and practitioners in the field of sport and exercise psychology to obtain informed consent from all clients before undertaking any work, and that efforts are made to provide such documents in the client's preferred language or that additional time is devoted to ensure all information is understood correctly.

In addition, practitioners are encouraged to respect their client's language preferences in applied work. Thus, additional skills or resources might be needed, such multilingualism or access to a network in the case that referrals are necessary.

Principle 6: Assist clients in understanding issues of multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and inclusion

In a broad sense, SEPPs educate individuals, group clients, as well as students, about cultural diversity. SEPPs may take on the role of mentor and teacher in helping enhance athletes' or coaches' understanding of their environments, of concerns that might arise due to cultural differences and human diversity, and of how these affect interactions.

Taking on the role of educators, SEPPs may encounter resistance to multicultural approaches while challenging clients' negative stereotypes and assumptions. This, however, should not become a reason to ignore the topic of cultural diversity. Instead, it should call for increased efforts to create safe learning environments, to help clients overcome their biases and to manage emotions associated with change.

Principle 7: Strive to increase equal access to services for diverse client groups

SEPPs should be aware that preferences may exist favouring work with certain client groups over others, and ensure open access to all sport participants, regardless of cultural background. Special efforts need to be invested to ensure availability of sport and exercise psychology services to minority or marginalised groups.

When organisational decisions favour certain client groups over others based on level of achievement, national origin, religious preferences, sexual orientation, level of ability/disability, or any other criteria, SEPPs should draw organisational attention to these injustices and invest efforts to eliminate them.

Principle 8: Act as agents of change in both the environment and the organisation

SEPPs are encouraged to be active agents of change, delivering messages of tolerance, equity, justice, of letting go of negative biases and stereotypes, and promoting understanding and appreciation of different cultural backgrounds and contexts. In the same vein, SEPPs should be aware of their responsibility for, as well as personal and professional roles in, effecting change in the sport community toward multicultural acceptance and inclusivity.

SEPPs can also be role models for athletes, coaches, families, and organisations in the treatment of culturally diverse or minority clients and students with specific needs.

SEPPs should also be aware of organisational policies related to multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion, and to suggest relevant changes if their position allows and if deemed necessary.

SEPPs should work on the prevention of all forms of racism, discrimination, marginalisation, and stigmatisation.

These guidelines are based on APA Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists (2002), BPS Division of Clinical psychology Inclusivity strategy 2016-2018 (2016), APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients (2012), ISSP Position Stand: Culturally competent research and practice in sport and exercise psychology (Ryba., Stambulova, Si & Schinke, 2013), ISSP Position Stand: Transnationalism, Mobility, and Acculturation in and through Sport (Ryba, Schinke, Stambulova, & Elbe, 2017).

References

APA (2002), Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists American Psychological Association, <http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/policy/multicultural-guideline.pdf>, last retrieved 13/06/2017

APA. (2012) *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients*, <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/amp-a0024659.pdf>, last retrieved 13/06/2017
BPS, Division of Clinical Psychology (2016), Inclusivity Strategy 2016–2018, <https://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/user-files/Division%20of%20Clinical%20psychology/public/dcp-inclusivity-strategy-web.pdf>, last retrieved 13/06/2017

Ryba, T. V., Stambulova, N. B., Si, G., & Schinke, R. J. (2013). ISSP Position Stand: Culturally competent research and practice in sport and exercise psychology. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11(2), 123–142. doi:10.1080/1612197X.2013.779812

Ryba, T., Schinke, R., Stambulova, N. & Elbe, A.-M. (2017). ISSP Position Stand: Transnationalism, Mobility, and Acculturation in and through Sport. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2017.128>

Date, Place

Signature

