

*Full Length Research Paper*

## Determining positions and desired applicant characteristics in sports job ads

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The purpose of this study is to determine the diversity of positions occurring in sports job ads and reveal the characteristics requested from applicants for each position. This study examined 103 sports-related job ads obtained from four human resources websites. Using content analysis, job ads were examined in terms of job titles, and the characteristics obtained from each job description were expressed by tabulating percentage and frequency. The positions of “subscription services” and “sports news editor” were found to be new positions in job ads. Although certain candidate characteristics were common to all positions, it was observed that some characteristics changed among different ads for the same position. In general, characteristics such as “being experienced,” “graduating from a school of physical education and sports,” “being able to work on a team,” “strong communication skills,” and “flexible working hours” occurred in many ads. According to the obtained data, the desired education level could be standardized according to the positions in job ads; moreover, certain characteristics, such as having strong communication skills or debonairness could be considered standard for all ads under a general title. The findings suggest that the necessary education levels should be considered for all characteristics that occur in job ads, and especially projects should be developed that provide experience for students.

**Key words:** Job ads, human resources, employment, careers.

### INTRODUCTION

In sports-related recruitment and employment, personnel play an important role in the effectiveness of sports services. Sports personnel affect customers' quality evaluations in two ways: (1) by producing and presenting sports services together with the customer and (2) through their behaviors during the production and consumption of sports services. The success of sports-related businesses depends on the efficacy of personnel who are in direct contact with customers and the

personnel's success in bilateral relationships. Therefore, the selection of effective sports services personnel is vitally important (Serarslan and Kepoğlu, 2005; Watt, 2005).

It is widely recognized that human resources management is critically important for the continued existence and success of a company. A company that does not implement human resources management principles will have difficulty cultivating efficient employees (Çalık,

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2006, as cited in Karakaya et al., 2013). Recruiting personnel, locating personnel resources, and ensuring continuity are some of the important functions of human resources.

The selection process involves determining the most appropriate job candidate among several applicants in terms of qualifications (Yüksel, 2003). Recruitment, as one of the most important areas of human resources management, can be defined as hiring employees who not only meet the qualifications for the job but will also contribute to the future success of the company. In the recruitment process, candidates who can perform the work must first be identified, and then the most appropriate applicant must be selected (Basım and Argan, 2009). This process, which comprises an important area of study in human resources, includes determining personnel needs, announcing this need using the appropriate means, receiving applications, recruiting candidates, and hiring the appropriate applicants (Findıkçı, 2012). Job descriptions, requirements, and qualifications should be introduced during the search process, and they should be calibrated to find the right personnel for the position (Yüksel, 2003).

Ideally, job requirements and candidate qualifications will be compatible during the personnel selection stage. When applicants' qualifications fall short of the job's requirements, the wrong personnel are recruited for the position. In such cases, restarting the selection process will cost the organization additional time and money (Basım and Argan, 2009).

Job ads are of particular concern to candidates who seek employment or want to change jobs. Newspapers, periodicals, and websites are known as places where job ads are easily found. The descriptions of job titles, qualifications, and requirements that appear in such ads have great importance (Latif and Uçkun, 2004). Further, it should be noted that equal job opportunities are available to all applicants regardless of gender, marital status, pregnancy, religion, or race (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2003).

Many recent studies have emphasized the importance of career training along with innovations in the field of education (cited by Karakaya et al., 2013; Rojewski and Kim, 2003). Various educational approaches can help students to find jobs and be successful in their careers. To improve curricula, academicians plan courses covering leadership, management, personality, and human relations. Factors such as internships, friends, teachers, families, and counselors have great influence over career choices (Mathner and Martin, 2012). Aytac (2005, as cited in Karakaya et al., 2013) defined *career* as involving many processes covering experiences and attitudes in a person's business life, which the person will always have to face throughout his or her professional career. In addition, Mafini et al. (2013) noted five important factors for job satisfaction: working conditions, ability utilization, teamwork, creativity, and autonomy.

The skills needed for a successful career in sports

marketing are attention to detail, passion, flexibility, communication, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, and individual trust ([www.career.opcd.wfu.edu](http://www.career.opcd.wfu.edu)). Karakaya et al. (2013) found that, for students, possessing knowledge and information about their skills and career values will help them find a career they will be happy to have throughout their lives. People should seek to make the best professional choices for themselves by comparing their personal skills and values when evaluating and deciding upon their career paths.

The problem of finding appropriate and effective personnel applies to businesses of all sizes and sectors (Findıkçı, 2012). This study sought to determine the diversity of positions specific to sports services jobs and discover the characteristics of those positions based on applicant requirements stated in the job ads.

## METHOD

### The model of the research

Content analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, is based on acquisition of systematic and common data about the content of a large number of texts (Gokce, 2006). Document screening (web page) was performed in this study in order to obtain data from a large number of texts systematically based on content analysis.

### Study group

This study examined 103 sports-related job ads obtained from four human resources websites between November 1 and 25, 2013. These websites can be considered the most comprehensive job sites on the Internet; they were selected as appropriate for the scope of this study since they contain all job ads found on many other smaller websites for this field.

### Data collection tool

Human resources websites publishing job ads in Turkish language were identified and determined by making search on search engine websites through internet. Four websites among those were examined by the aid of a form prepared and issued by the researcher. The following questions took place in the context of the draft form prepared by the researcher: For which position is the job ad about on the website? What are the qualifications and desired characteristics demanded for the position? In addition, other available information found while examining the job ads on websites were recorded. Different positions stated in the province ads and the qualifications and desired characteristics demanded for the position were obtained as the result of that examination.

### Data analysis

Data were classified in the qualitative research and divided into clusters in accordance with their similarities and differences. Categories were formed or it was benefited from available categories during that process (Kus, 2006). In this study, available job ads were evaluated as position titles and the qualifications and desired characteristics were evaluated as categories and sub-categories. In addition, job ads published within the dates mentioned in the study performed based on content analysis method were

**Table 1.** Distribution of positions in job ads (n = 13).

Name of position	F	%
Fitness instructor	30	29.1
Physical education and sports teacher	13	12.6
Coach	10	9.7
Sports instructor	9	8.7
Lifeguard	8	7.7
Animator	6	5.8
Masseur/masseuse	6	5.8
Pilates instructor	6	5.8
Sports manager	4	3.8
Swimming instructor/coach	4	3.8
Subscription services	3	2.9
Gymnastics instructor/coach	2	1.9
Sports news editor	2	1.9
Total	103	100

examined as positions and the desired characteristics and qualifications that will be requested from candidates were determined in each position description. The desired characteristics and qualifications derived from each position description were expressed in tables by the terms of frequency and percentage. The importance and state were determined in accordance with the density of the characteristics and qualifications mentioned above.

## RESULTS

In this section, job positions and their characteristics were tabulated according to the obtained data, and descriptions were developed related to the results.

As shown in Table 1, the analyzed ads covered 13 job positions. The top three positions were fitness instructor (29.1%), physical education and sports teacher (12.6%), and coach (9.7%). Positions that occurred less frequently included sports news editor (1.9%), gymnastics instructor (1.9%), and subscription services (2.9%).

For the position of fitness instructor, the top characteristics included flexible working hours (9.7%), being able to work on a team (9.2%), being experienced (8.6%), graduating from a school of physical education and sports (8.1%), and debonairness (7.6%). Near the bottom were characteristics such as having at least a high school education (1.0%), graduating from a school of physical education and sports or being certified (1.0%), being able to orient oneself to intense work pressure (1.0%), and nonsmoker (1.0%).

The top characteristics for physical education and sports teachers included graduating from a school of physical education and sports (21.6%), being experienced (13.3%), and having strong communication skills (13.3%). The bottom characteristics included having organizational skills (1.6%), being dynamic (1.6%), and knowing English (1.6%).

For the position of coach, graduating from high school (15.6%), being certified (2.5%), and having a high sense of responsibility (9.3%) were the top characteristics. The lowest included having an aptitude for dancing (3.1%), having knowledge about football (3.1%), and being open to learning (3.1%).

For sports instructors, the most frequently mentioned characteristics included having strong communication skills (14.2%), graduating from a school of physical education and sports or being a student in such a school (9.5%), and being open to learning (9.5%). The least mentioned characteristics included having proficiency with computers (2.3%), being responsive (2.3%), and having knowledge of more than one sport (2.3%).

The top characteristics for lifeguards included having a lifeguard certificate (22.8%), having graduated high school (11.4%), and having good human relations skills (8.5%). The lowest included having strong communication skills (2.8%), being a nonsmoker (2.8%), and having good diction (2.8%).

For animators, the top characteristics included being experienced (15.1%), having good human relations (12.1%), and knowing German and English (12.1%). The bottom included having organizational skills (3.0%), having aptitude for dancing (3.0%), and knowing English (3.0%).

The top characteristics for masseur/masseuse included being certified (20.0%), being experienced (16.6%), and giving importance to personal appearance (10.0%). The least mentioned characteristics included having at least a high school diploma (3.3%), having no military service problems (3.3%), and being solution oriented (3.3%).

For the position of gymnastics instructor/coach, having graduated from a school of physical education and sports or being a current student in such a school was the single characteristic (100%).

For Pilates instructors, the top characteristics included being experienced (13.3%), having good human relations (10.0%), and being presentable (10.0%). The bottom included graduating from a school of physical education and sports (3.3%), having knowledge of more than one type of sport (3.3%), and knowing English (3.3%).

The top characteristics for sports managers included being experienced (21.0%), graduating from a school of physical education and sports (15.7%), and having strong communication skills (15.7%). The bottom characteristics included being open to learning (5.2%), having organizational skills (5.2%), and being dynamic (5.2%).

For the position of swimming instructor/coach, the top characteristics included graduating from a school of physical education and sports (16.6%), being experienced (16.6%), and being able to work on a team (11.1%). The least mentioned characteristics included having proficiency with computers (5.5%), being dynamic (5.5%), and being cooperative (5.5%).

For jobs in subscription services, the most mentioned characteristics included having proficiency with computers

**Table 2.** General distribution of the characteristics of the positions

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>F</b>
Being experienced	56
Graduating from a school of physical education and sports	44
Being able to work on a team	41
Having strong communication skills	36
Flexible working hours	32
Debonairness	29
Good human relations	26
Being open to learning	22
Being certified	21
Being presentable	20
Graduating from a school of physical education and sports or being enrolled in such a school	19
Giving importance to personal appearance, having a strong sense of responsibility, knowing English, being dynamic	16
Having at least a high school diploma, being proficient with computers	10
Having a lifeguard certificate, being cooperative	9
Having no military service problems	8
Having good diction, being able to orient oneself to intense work pressure	6
Preferably know English	5
Know German and English	4
Having strong communication skills with children, having organizational skills, nonsmoker, preferably graduating from a school of physical education and sports, preferably knowing a foreign language	3
Having knowledge of aerobics, graduating from a school of physical education and sports or being certified, having knowledge of more than one area of sports, being disposed to work with children, being social and enjoyable, having at least a high school diploma, having interest in various areas of sports, having graduated from a university, having an aptitude for dancing	2
Graduating from a school of physical education and sports or from a faculty of tourism, being solution oriented, having knowledge of football, having a first aid certificate, being patient, being receptive	1

(13.0%), being experienced (13.0%), and knowing English (13.0%). The least mentioned characteristics included graduating from a school of physical education and sports or from a faculty of tourism (4.3%), being dynamic (4.3%), and having strong communication skills (4.3%).

The top characteristics for sports news editors included being interested in various types of sports (25.0%), graduating from a university (25.0%), and knowing English (12.5%). The bottom included being experienced (12.5%), having proficiency with computers (12.5%), and having a high sense of responsibility (12.5%).

Examining the distribution of characteristics for all positions (Table 2), being experienced, graduating from a school of physical education and sports, being able to work on a team, having strong communication skills, and debonairness appeared with the highest frequency.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Many special features were identified in the ads for the thirteen sports-related positions examined in this study. Following the stated purpose of the research, the results showed the diversity of positions appearing in sports job

ads and identified the features requested from applicants for each position.

The requirement that candidates for coach positions be “high school graduates” has implications for individuals currently enrolled in undergraduate education since being a high school graduate is considered sufficient for the job. Asking that lifeguard applicants be certified was an expected result given the potential legal liabilities that accompany such work. The characteristic of “being experienced” for animators and Pilates instructors can be interpreted as stemming from the implementation-based nature of the work. The requirement that masseur/masseuse applicants “be certified” pertains to the documentation requirements for such work. “Being proficient with computers” was expected for subscription services jobs since the work is mostly performed using computers.

The results showed that desired characteristics varied according to position, and a characteristic that was important for one position might have been less so for another. Certain characteristics, such as “good human relations” and “debonairness,” could be subject to evaluation during the interview process or during the trial period of employment. Bravo et al. (2012) suggested that

various elements are important during the employment process. The primary elements include work ethic, communication skills, motivation, maturity, thinking ability, decision-making skills, human relations, technical skills, and naturalness. Other elements include experience, leadership skills, references, undergraduate education, certification, participation in sports, and academic achievement. Many of these characteristics were observed as important in the job ads examined for this study.

Characteristics that appeared frequently such as “graduating from a school of physical education and sports,” “being experienced,” “being able to work on a team,” and “having strong communication skills” warrant attention. A preference for candidates who have graduated from a school of physical education and sports can be viewed as appropriate for businesses operating in sports-related services. Taşmektepligil et al. (2009) supported this preference, noting that individuals educated in sports and physical education has a more intense orientation toward sports activities. With increased public interest in sports and physical activities, problems that arise are more likely to be resolved if priority is given to candidates with a sports-related education. Meanwhile, job experience (“being experienced”) has been mentioned in the selection criteria for candidates who apply for jobs in the Department of Sport and Recreation (2003). Patterson and Allen (1996) defined certain skills for job success in the new millennium, placing emphasis on teamwork (“being able to work on a team”). Lastly, NACE (2005) found that employers emphasize communication and teamwork skills in hiring candidates and in their continued employment (Doğu et al., 2013).

In their study of the career skills needed for success in the administration of school sports, Won et al. (2013) found that work experience, motivation, education, leadership skills, academic achievement, and professional suitability were the main factors affecting recruitment. In addition, human-interaction skills, compliance, conceptual skills, creativity, and technical skills have been revealed as effective factors for successful administrative management. Furthermore, Vilorio (2012) found that coaches require interpersonal, decision-making, and leadership skills, among others, to develop their athletes. Lastly, executives at different levels in various organizations related to physical education have been found to require conceptual skills, humanitarian skills, and technical skills (cited by Benar et al., 2014; Goodarzy, Kouzechian and Ehsani, 2003).

This study’s analysis of sports job ads revealed that “subscription services” and “sports news editor” have emerged as new areas of sports-related employment. These new jobs can be viewed as creating new opportunities for careers in sports. In general, while certain characteristics were common to all positions, some characteristics changed among different ads for the same position. According to the data obtained in this study, the

desired level of education can be standardized according to job position. Further, characteristics such as having strong communication skills or debonairness may be viewed as typical for all job ads under a general title. Necessary educational attainment should be considered for all characteristics that occur in job ads. In particular, projects should be developed that provide experience for students.

### Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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