

'The only person you can delegate tasks to is yourself'

Leadership challenges and turnover in national federations of sport

Hans Erik Næss¹ & Tor Anders Hanssen²

¹ Kristiania University College; ² Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

Author contact <hanserik.naess@kristiania.no>

Abstract

Between 2015 and 2019, 52 per cent of the Secretary Generals (SGs) of Norwegian sport federations left their positions. As this rate is significantly higher than in the Norwegian labour market in general and poses a further difficulty for a Norwegian sport system already facing many challenges, this article examines why this is the case. The topic is relevant because the working conditions of Norwegian sport leaders are under-explored given their important role in the way sporting federations shape society. As key representatives for the national federations under The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) umbrella, SGs and Presidents have responsibility for NIF's 1.9 million members and are instrumental in managing a total worth of approximately 34 billion euros. Because SGs can be said to be more integrated than Presidents into the daily management of federations and into the human relationship responsibilities that comprise it, this article draws upon qualitative interviews with 16 Secretary Generals to present six reasons why working conditions challenges emerge. The article thus provides a contribution to sport leadership research and shows how the lack of continuity among SGs in national sport federations demonstrates the need for organisational change.

Keywords: turnover, sport, top managers, qualitative research, secretary generals, national sport federations, working conditions, Norwegian sports

Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium, sport federations have been facing new challenges when it comes to organisational development, leadership, sustainability and good governance (Chappelet, 2018; Geeraert, 2019; Lindholm, 2022). These challenges, amplified by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (Evans et al., 2020), mean that good leadership has become crucial to the road taken. This does not imply that leaders know everything, or that sport federations need a certain type of leader, but that leadership has become important because sport federations are growing in organisational complexity and in terms of their stakeholder relations (Burton, Kane & Borland, 2019; Swanson & Welty Peachy, 2022). An organisation that has been affected by these challenges is the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF). It is the governing body of most Norwegian sports with 55 national federations, 11 regions, and almost 9,500 clubs under its umbrella. From having around 400,000 members in 1968 (Lesjø, 2009, p. 57), it represents about 1.9 million in 2022 (NIF, 2022).

Several proposals on how to handle this growth have already been made. The Strategy Committee for Norwegian Sport (*Strategiutvalget for norsk idrett*), established by the Norwegian government in 2015 to come up with suggestions for solving sport's challenges, wrote in its 2017 report that an integrated sport confederation enables a coherent development and value platform for Norwegian sport. Yet, the Committee also underlined that this integration, which would require advancing the relations between NIF and the national federations, engenders the possibility for internal tension (Strategiutvalget for norsk idrett, 2017, p. 20). Similarly, one of the three main pillars of NIF's ongoing modernisation project (*Moderniseringsprosjekt*) concerns organisational changes (focus areas include a clearer division of responsibilities, efficient management of the national federations and increased use of shared services). Only a few studies, however, have explored leadership issues in Norwegian national federations in connection with the challenges described above (Broch & Skille, 2019; Schaillée et al., 2021; Sogn, Skirstad & Strandbu, 2021). Neither NIF's plans for 2019-2023 (NIF, 2019a; 2019b), its 'modernisation project', nor the Norwegian government's strategy for an inclusive sport after the pandemic (Kulturdepartementet, 2021) addresses the working conditions of sport leaders.

This article fills the gap by exploring why 52 per cent of Norwegian Secretary Generals (SGs) in national federations left their positions between

2015 and 2019, that is, within the span of NIF's parliamentary term (now changed to two years). This turnover rate is significantly higher than the 14-16 per cent between 2000 and 2015 for Norwegian workers in general (Dale-Olsen, 2016), and probably higher than that for leaders in similar positions in other spheres. The Norwegian Bureau of Statistics informs us that 'leaders' is the profession with the fewest number of job changes among those who have held such positions a short time (SSB, 2020, p. 15). Comparable turnover statistics for leaders are, however, hard to find because few studies explore why individual top managers leave their jobs, and turnover research focuses on other processes (Knudsen, Ducharme & Roman, 2009; Stewart & Diebold, 2017; Andrus et al., 2019). Either way, given the current transformations of sport, we would claim that a situation where more than half of those in key top management positions in national federations leave their jobs before the end of their term is problematic and should be explored further.

To examine why they leave and how this turnover relates to leadership issues and organisational development, this article draws upon in-depth qualitative interviews with 16 Norwegian SGs – twelve who have left and four who remain in their positions. The intention behind this choice of data and method was to gather individual narratives about the Secretary Generals' everyday life as leaders, i.e., the principles promoted by the 'Leadership-as-practice' field (Raelin, 2017). Moreover, we have a particular interest in how the practice of leadership among Norwegian SGs has affected their decisions as they are formally equal in rank with the President in the Federation. This arrangement closes the gap between traditionally separated ideas of 'management' and 'leadership', as both positions involve hands-on tasks (doing things right) and strategic work (doing the right things) (cf. Bennis & Nanus, 1985). On paper, SGs and Presidents are thus expected to conduct shared leadership of a national federation, where top management representatives 'mutually influence each other and collectively share leadership roles, responsibilities and functions' (Wu & Cormican, 2021; see also Zhu et al., 2018). But, as we will demonstrate, this shared leadership situation involves a power asymmetry, cultural differences and structural constraints, and therefore affects SGs' working conditions beyond the formal division of labour.

This study distinguishes itself from existing research on turnover, which predominantly emphasises quantitative methods and predictions of turnover intentions in the business sector (Dale-Olsen, 2016; Andrus et al., 2019; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2020) and offers two unique insights. First,

it contributes to sport leadership research by offering qualitative insights into how one of the most important roles in national sport federations is shaped by its relationship with the rest of the organisation and by contextual factors. Secondly, it offers an analysis of why leaders choose to leave their jobs by drawing upon Lee and Mitchell's (1994) 'unfolding theory'. In that connection, the article identifies some structural turnover issues that NIF should acknowledge in order to reach their modernisation goals. In what follows, we will thus introduce existing research on turnover and explain the positioning of our study. Then, we will present the data and methods of the article, before we introduce six push factors as to why Secretary Generals left their jobs. Finally, we will discuss the implication of the findings and provide some pointers for further research.

Turnover, leadership and sport

There are many reasons why people leave their jobs and create turnover in organisations. Prior research on voluntary turnover divides these reasons into push (something within the organisation drives them towards an exit), pull (something outside the organisation makes a stronger appeal), or personal (people change jobs for other reasons, such as illness in the family) (Choi & Park, 2020). Across these categories, research identifies the impact of business cycles, gender differences, emotional stress, lack of role clarity, educational background, the relationship between leader and employee, differing degrees of motivation, stress and personal issues (Knudsen, Ducharme & Roman, 2009; Bryant & Allen, 2013; Kuvaas, 2019). For organisations, research underlines two outcomes from turnover: negative and positive. On the negative side, new recruitments often come with a cost, productivity may fall, and the work environment can turn sour (Shaw, 2011). High turnover can also have a contagious effect and harm the work environment as well as the organisation's reputation (Shapiro et al. 2016; Cregård & Corin, 2019). On the positive side, some turnover may be healthy for an organisation. It ensures competence renewal, reduces staff wear and contributes to a more diverse workplace (Shapiro et al., 2016; Cregård & Corin, 2019).

Despite an increasing diversity of approaches, methods and theories used in turnover research (Lee et al., 2017), critics claim that the continued focus on evidence-based studies excludes insight into interpersonal reasons why leaders quit their jobs. Moreover, critics also claim that quan-

titative studies say little about the process between when people think about leaving and whether they quit or remain (Cregård & Corin 2019, p. 160; see also Cohen, Blake & Goodman, 2016, Corin, Berntson & Härenstam, 2016). Low turnover rates can affect the organisation more heavily than high turnover rates if the former involves key personnel leaving (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013). Sometimes there are no obvious reasons for the fluctuations in turnover rates and they may have positive or negative consequences for the organisation depending on the situation it is in, and the timeframe involved (sometimes, it is good for the organisation if troublemakers leave). Finally, the optimal level of turnover is difficult to pinpoint (Shapiro et al., 2016). For these reasons, it becomes a challenge for the organisation to select the right retention strategy, that is, how to keep valuable employees and foster organisational commitment (Kyndt et al., 2009).

Alternatively, we can examine the antecedents of why leaders leave with Lambert's (2001) understanding of 'work environment' as point of departure. This term refers to the symbiosis of organisational or structural elements (division of labour, conflict solving mechanisms, hierarchy and career opportunities) with job characteristics (role clarity, communication norms and knowledge demands) (Lambert, 2001). The reason for this interconnected emphasis on 'aspects of leadership, work design and relationships with others' (Bryant & Allen, 2013, p. 173) in relation to turnover, is that employees 'with clear role expectations, minimal role conflict, and opportunities for growth and advancement' and 'positive relations to others in the organization' are less likely to quit (Bryant & Allen, 2013, p. 174).

This type of social-psychological approach to the connection between work environment and turnover-related themes is not alien to sport research. For example, Wells and Welty Peachy (2011) and Kim et al. (2012) explore the relation between job satisfaction and leadership style. Others have focused on gender equality initiatives and turnover (Pfister & Radtke, 2006; Hovden, 2010; Evans & Pfister, 2021) or the personal costs of emotional labour among coaches (Lee & Chelladurai, 2018). Yet, there are no scientific studies, as far as we can tell, either internationally or in Norway, that examine the working conditions of Secretary Generals in national federations. Since the turnover among leaders in national federations is significantly higher than in other sectors and unaccounted for, it becomes relevant to ask why they quit – or why those who stay, do not – as well as to use this examination to address the development of sport leadership in the context described at the beginning of this article.

Theoretical framework

In the flora of theories that address turnover, Lee and Mitchell's 'unfolding theory' (1994) has received much attention and, more importantly, been proven adaptable to more recent working conditions (Hom et al., 2017; Hom, Allen & Griffith, 2019). What makes it relevant as a theoretical framework for this study is its combination of qualitative epistemology and image research. This approach was preferred by Lee and Mitchell over research based on rational choice or expectancy theory due to the many 'irrational' reasons why people choose to quit their jobs. Image management, in turn, is about processing information. People screen and sort impressions and information according to how it fits with the way they envision the job (Beach & Mitchell, 1987; Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The information is treated cognitively (what meaning does it have for my employment?), comparatively (how does the information compare to what I know about other job opportunities?) and strategically (in what ways can I use this information to realise my job wishes?) (Harman et al., 2007). If situations, experiences or, in the worst case, 'shocks' arise (Lee and Mitchell's concept of shock is elaborated in the next paragraph) that rattle employees' perceptions of their own values, career or strategies, they look at their job in a way that affects the commitment to the position negatively.

Admittedly, a shock in this setting can be interpreted in many ways (Kulik, Treuren & Bordia, 2012) and, in our view, the unfolding theory needs contextual specification when used. Holtom et al. (2005) emphasise that shock is a conceptual construction whose interpretation depends on 'the social and cognitive context that surrounds the shock experience. This context provides a frame of reference, or decision frame, within which an employee interprets the shock' (p. 341). But precisely because of this interpretative flexibility, it is important to examine how leaders in each sector or industry work to reduce the risks of shock through context-sensitive image management. Context in this sense reflects two things. First, the *climate*, or 'a shared sense of what the unit rewards, supports, and considers important', and second, *environmental complexity*, that is, 'the nature of interconnections and interdependence required by unit task demands' (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013, p. 120). To explore this qualitatively in national federations, we see leadership as practice according to the research field that goes by the same name, 'Leadership-as-practice (LAP)'. In contrast to most of the research on sport leadership, which follows transformational, authentic or social constructivist perspectives (Ferkins, Skinner

& Swanson, 2018; Malloy & Kavussanu, 2021), LAP proponents examine what leaders do, rather than what they should do, or rather than relying on theoretical types and then seeing whether leaders fit into them or not. The individual behaviour of leaders, along with their characteristics and skills, are seen as less relevant than the processes by which leadership is constituted by social interaction in a particular context (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2010; Crevani & Endrissat, 2016; Raelin, 2011; 2017).

Consequently, it is the relation between shocks and context that results in four types of decision processes that are linked to different behavioural patterns or what Lee and Mitchell (1994) call 'scripts'. In *the first type*, the employee quits immediately without having a clear idea of what to do next. The employee 'implements' the script automatically as a result of previous experience with similar situations. That is: 'if the employer does X, then I do Y, without further ado'. In *the second type* of selection process, a different script is implemented, although the shock may be the same. Employees assess to what extent the shock has affected their career and, for example, how great a distance there is between manager's and the employee's perception of the latter's productivity, task solution and organisational contribution. Lee and Mitchell refer here to the importance of push factors as they constitute the tipping point for whether the employee quits or stays. In *the third type* of selection process, the focus is on pull factors. Here, employees begin to compare their own work life with other offers and opportunities after the shock is a fact. The principle is that employees who choose this way out may have thought about the idea before the shock came and thus are more likely to see opportunities in the situation instead of thinking that they are being pushed out. In the *fourth and final process* Lee and Mitchell (1994) refer to, which consists of a combination of 1 and 2, the employee accumulates negative shocks over time and eventually quits there and then (1). The latter (2) does the same but perseveres until a new position is in sight.

Despite the adaptivity of Lee and Mitchell's model, the testing of it (Lee et al., 2017) has also led to discussions about what makes someone fit in process 1, 2, 3 or 4, and to what degree the substance of categorisation has to do with the fact that the sources of such shocks are complex and that 'people are different', to put it simply (Laulié & Morgeson, 2021; Porter & Rigby, 2021). Some empirical examples that point to different sources and conflicting perspectives on 'job embeddedness' (see below) may be a lack of preference match between person-organisation (Jin, McDonald & Park, 2018), the meaning the individual finds in the job declining (Arnoux-

Nicolas et al., 2016), or weak support from colleagues (Norling & Chopik, 2020). Viewing this criticism collectively, it forms in our view an incentive to be even more context-sensitive in our usage of the theory. Within this context of national federations, the factors affecting turnover can be gathered in the term ‘job embeddedness’ (Lee, Burch & Mitchell, 2014), that is, the combination of ‘fit’ (the degree of fit between the employee’s work life and everyday life), ‘links’ (the relationship between employees’ needs for relationships and actual relationships with others) and ‘sacrifice’ (what it takes to break up their current work situation). The argument is that the better the job integration, the better employees are protected against image breach and shock (Kulik, Treuren & Bordia, 2012, p. 40). In order to show how we have supplemented the unfolding theory and linked it to our topic, in the next section we will explain our data and use of method before we turn to our findings.

Data and methods

This study draws on 16 qualitative in-depth interviews with four current and 12 former Secretary Generals (SGs) from a total of 55 national sport federations in Norway. The recruitment of informants was carried out by the second author, who is also a Secretary General of a national federation. A total of 20 Secretary Generals (SGs) who had left their jobs were contacted via email, with a request to be interviewed. The final sample (table 1) was 10 men and six women, with an average age of 52.4 years.

These informants represent five large, five medium-sized and six small federations. On average, those who left had been in the position for five years, but there were significant variations – from half a year to 13 years – while those four who remained in position all had more than 15 years as SG. To protect the identity of the informants, they were anonymised to the point of being referred to as ‘the informants’ or SG1, SG2, and so on.

The purpose of these interviews was to understand what experiences and opinions the informants drew on in the decision to leave their job or stay as Secretary Generals in a Norwegian sport union. Like Cregård and Corin (2019), we argue that individual experiences about working conditions are not merely personal impressions. Narrative insights into people’s working lives communicate what people think is meaningful work, what they consider important to them in terms of staying put, and nuance the information that quantitative studies reveal (Czarniawska, 2007).

Table 1 *Sample characteristics*

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Leaver</i>	<i>Retainer</i>
SG1	F	X	
SG2	F	X	
SG3	M	X	
SG4	M	X	
SG5	F	X	
SG6	M	X	
SG7	F	X	
SG8	F	X	
SG9	M	X	
SG10	M	X	
SG11	F	X	
SG12	M	X	
SG13	M		X
SG14	M		X
SG15	M		X
SG16	M		X

The second author who conducted the interviews is an SG and is therefore an insider in the field. Due to the interviewer's insider status, we saw the interviews as a dynamic knowledge production process. This can have both disadvantages and advantages. Of advantages, the author's insider status may have meant a faster build-up of trust among the informants and a willingness on their part to share sensitive experiences. This is because it is believed that the interviewer can more easily understand their situation (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). Insider status can make it possible to speak the 'tribal language' and thereby have better conditions for distinguishing between what informants say because they think the researcher will hear it, and statements come 'straight from the liver'. In terms of disadvantages, we consider that these assumptions from the informants can also lead them to withhold information or try to present their story in a more advantageous way for them (Chavez, 2008). In this context, the interviewer's own understanding can also stand in the way of asking more about certain topics, since he or she already has an idea of what the situation is like (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). To reduce the disadvantages of

insider status, the second author invited three current SGs not interviewed in this article to develop a ‘thought map’ before we embarked on the interviews. The purpose was to map out which systems, routines, responsibilities and tasks they must deal with in everyday life. Based on the thought map, an interview guide was designed, and the interviews were then conducted in the autumn of 2020. They lasted between one and a half and two and a half hours and were then transcribed verbatim.

In reading these transcripts, we first searched for what Smith and McGannon (2018, p. 109) call ‘inter-rater reliability’, which refers to the process by which two or more researchers code the content separately and then agree on a credible interpretation of the findings. The coding itself then took place in two steps to meet two requirements for qualitative analyses. We first sought ‘intercoder reliability’ by sharing the transcribed interviews between us. We agreed that in this phase we would look for ‘shocks’ related to the process from when people are hired as a leader in a federation until they choose to leave the position. We then sought to reach an ‘intercoder agreement’, where we discussed the strength of the coding and agreed on what the codes indicated of reasons for leaving or staying (Smith & McGannon, 2018, p. 109). To strengthen the study’s credibility, ‘member checks’ were made with the informants as well as with other researchers to evaluate to what extent insider status could lead to information being either withheld, taken for granted, or influencing the interviewer. These checks were made in several stages: before the interviews (in the design of the interview guide), during the interview period itself (to ensure that the interview guide worked as intended) and after the verbatim transcription was completed, before the analysis formally started.

Since none of the informants pointed to pull factors in the interviews, the coding resulted in six push factors divided into external and internal conditions. Initially, the data indicate that our informants can be placed in script number 2 in Lee and Mitchell’s model. But as we shall see in the next sections, the informants have various reasons for doing so, and in addition, we cannot exclude the possibility that the informants had surveyed the job market before a decision was made, even though none of them mentioned it explicitly. We must also emphasise that neither data nor analysis theory enables the identification of causal processes. However, as both those who remained in their positions and those who left them point to many of the same aspects of the work environment as problematic, our data support our assumption that national sport federations contain some specific process

challenges that it would be appropriate to address to reduce the ‘shocks’ that Lee and Mitchell (1994) refer to and to reduce the risk of turnover.

Results I: Push factors associated with external conditions

We found three push factors associated with organisational conditions and the contextual impact from environmental complexity. Nyberg and Ployhart (2013) claim that ‘greater environmental complexity is associated with greater collective turnover consequences, because more complex environments require more synchronous member interaction, coordination, communication and adaptation’ (p. 121). Similarly, our informants underlined the discrepancy between the tasks that the SG role entails and the federation’s resources to realise them as the primary push factor.

Push factor one: the SG leadership role is not adapted to the organisation’s characteristics

Fleshing out this first pull factor, almost all the informants describe the SG leadership role as unclear and not especially adapted to the organisation’s characteristics. However, this negative impression varies with size. The federations included in the study are predominantly small and have tiny administrations. The result is that many of their SGs feel like all-rounders:

I think based on the resources you have [as an SG], you have to be a bit of a potato in the role that I had. It is really about having the capacity to control many work processes at the same time. In addition to the normal tasks, which were quite a lot, completely unforeseen things appeared all the time. (SG 3)

When asked where these tasks and unforeseen things came from, one informant expressed the general view: ‘From NIF, from board members, from clubs, and so on.’ (SG 2) Similar findings are presented in studies of managers in the public sector, as ‘the operations managers who were inclined to leave, or who had left said that they were assigned too many tasks that were not in their job descriptions’ (Corin & Cregård, 2019, p. 170). In order to be everyday leaders and cope with the shifting conditions at work, some sought advice from NIF, who communicates well with the sport federations. At the same time, the informants point out that the way

in which NIF is involved often contributes to fragmented everyday working conditions for the SGs, especially those who lead small federations. One informant described it this way: 'A lot of ad hoc work, a lot. Incredible workload, so many requests'. (SG 7) Another informant who left said:

The most challenging was probably all the meetings, which demanded an extreme amount of time. My experience was that I got an answer from NIF if I got in touch, but no contact was ever made the other way. Or... the contact made the other way came in the form of an order [to do something]. (SG 3)

In addition, it is not clear to the informants whether the meetings require their presence. Therefore, they show up for everything, get the same information several times, which consumes too much of their work capacity: as one informant said: 'The biggest challenge with NIF's meetings was that there were many double or triple meetings with the same content. The meetings were very one-way and instructional.' (SG 14) When asked about the results of NIF's many meetings, the answer from another informant was telling: 'NIF's meetings gave us nothing but information.' (SG 7) Lack of manpower in the national federations and weak support from NIF to balance daily operation, organisational development and strategic adjustment thus ends with a paradox for the SGs: when they try to do everything, they are not able to do anything.

Push factor two: the board is seen as an obstacle to the federation's innovation

The second push factor is related to the first and is the experience of the board's role and board meetings as obstacles to the federation's innovation. Board compositions in sporting federations have become a compromise in two ways. First, between democratic representation and professionalization, partly to meet increasing societal demands on accountability and good governance, which has led to conflicting views about its purpose and work form (Stenling et al., 2023). Second, all boards in federations that are part of NIF balance their own setup with NIF's overall 'Lovnorm' (legal norms) (NIF, 2021). Although NIF does not give a fixed number on how many members a board must have, or a provide a template on how the board must be put together, NIF still regulate many functions of it. For example, the 'Lovnorm' states that it is the chairman or at least two board

members who decides how often board meetings are needed, and what it takes of voting to make a decision.

Our informants point to an excessive meeting frequency combined with poor meeting structure and low competence among the board members. The inefficiency of board meetings was apparently amplified by the fact that most national federations had frequent board meetings, often once a month, with one informant giving an even higher number: 'We had at least 15 board meetings a year. Much too often'. (SG 12) These are meetings that SGs must prepare for and participate in, and last but not least, they must implement the decisions made there. Finally, several SGs had the experience of being treated as the administrator of the board, even though the board in their view had little knowledge of the complex work conditions that a federation lives by. An informant said that:

The board had little understanding for, or an overview of, where the federation was at. There was a very big gap between the everyday life I lived in and the demands and expectations from the board. (SG 1)

Another informant put it like this:

Generally, the board has little insight [into the federation]. The board members require case documents to read up on things in a relatively short time and get an overview, so that they feel they can decide upon something. (SG 7)

This way of working became especially difficult when more strategic choices were involved, as noted by one informant: 'A huge conflict arose about the strategy related to elite sports. Some people think that if we do not have a national team, then we have nothing.' (SG 12) Another informant shared a similar consideration: 'The board has a very elite sports focus. It was an exaggerated emphasis on national teams, but also in terms of priorities, finances and dreams.' (SG 1)

The situation where sport federation boards are mostly concerned with athlete performance is neither unusual nor unexpected. Board meetings are the hub of national federations' operations, while local sports teams and clubs are responsible for other parts like organisational development and recruitment. At the same time, the work must be balanced with organisational innovation to meet the challenges pointed out in the introduction to this article. One of the informants said that:

The idea of proceeding from a 'working board' to 'corporate governance' is good, but it means that the federation must have a minimum administration that can deliver what is demanded from it. Presently, one 'head' is supposed to cover many areas and that is not possible. (SG 12)

This impression of being left alone with too many responsibilities seems to be amplified by the third push factor, which was the relationship with the Presidents.

Push factor three: the relationship with the President turned sour

For many SGs, the relationship with the President developed in a negative direction: 'In a way, the board members become puppets in a game where he [the President] of course has his allies, but probably some passive opponents as well.' (SG 4) According to the SGs, the President's chairing of the meeting did not hold up well enough either: 'A lot of talking, arguing and quarrelling. Not one board meeting happened without someone crying.' (SG 7)

Ongoing challenges in organisations with shared leadership are not unique to sport. A study of turnover among Norwegian public chief officers (*rådmenn*) showed that cooperation problems with the mayor and others in the political leadership were the reason why approximately 30 per cent of them quit (Agenda/PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2010, p. 12). Although there is formal differentiation between primary and secondary control within an organisation with shared leadership, informal power relations and normative expectations between parties are just as important for which decisions are made and how the collaboration works (Zhu et al., 2018). In part, as several of the informants mentioned, this could be because the President has the power together with the board to both hire and remove the SG, and thus may feel in a different position than the SGs. One of the informants, whose reasons for leaving the job were on the border between being pushed out and going voluntarily, described the President as follows: 'He was President with a capital P. When he decided he wanted me out, he conspired with the vice president behind my back. Then he got the rest of the board to support him.' (SG 2) Another informant experienced that the President had an agenda of his own: 'It is a condescending technique where you force through a decision; "We have to agree on this now."' (SG 4)

Results II: Push factors associated with internal conditions

We found three push factors associated with job characteristics and the contextual impact from ‘climate’ (as discussed in the Theory section), which ‘represents the degree to which unit members have a shared sense of what the unit expects, rewards, and supports’ (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013, p 113).

Push factor four: too little time to develop as a leader

The fourth push factor, which is also most emphasised in this context, is that it takes time to develop as a leader in a Norwegian national federation. One reason is a lack of clarification of expectations. For example, one informant said: ‘I came to an empty office. There was a desk and a computer. The rest was up to me.’ (SG 1) While the informants shared an expectation of getting basic onboarding when they started their job, the rest of the national federations apparently expected that the SGs would manage it on their own. One informant said:

I thought that when I came the first day to work that there should be someone from NIF there. You will be completely alone and as you also have an expectation that there should be some kind of introduction to the organisation, then you will be even lonelier. (SG 5)

Basically, the SGs would like to be properly introduced to the national federation as an organisation:

Throughout the first week, you should have been guided around the organisation, had someone to hold your hand. You could attend some meetings, get an introduction to the most important processes, how the sport is organised and how the national federation deal with the responsibility for what is unique to this organisation. Simply a thorough introduction to the sport’s organisational understanding. (SG 3)

Studies from the same period as our analysis of managers’ relationship to development plans show that those with such plans have lower intentions of changing jobs than those without (HR Norway/Ennova, 2017). On the other hand, it is surprising that people employed in such positions as SG are not well acquainted with their new employer’s organisational de-

mands and resources. Most informants in this article have a long career in sport as athletes, coaches and elected representatives, also in other national federations. But any recruitment of top managers requires a transition period from newly hired to fully integrated into the role. According to research, successful onboarding processes treat employees ‘with appropriate concern for their interests as part of their assumptions in coming into a new organization’ (Caldwell & Peters, 2018, p. 27), whereas ineffective onboarding ‘destroys benefits achieved by hiring talented employees and increases the likelihood that the hard work spent in recruiting and selecting those employees will be wasted’ (Caldwell & Peters, 2018, p. 27). Our informants seem to be at the ineffective end of this spectrum. It seems as if it was taken for granted that the SGs did not need any introduction to the SG role and that they would ‘hit the ground running’.

Push factor five: a lack of support from the rest of the federation’s leadership in developing the organisation

This brings us to the fifth push factor: a lack of support from the rest of the federation’s leadership in developing the organisation. A survey showed that Norwegian organisations are generally bad at introducing new employees into the company, including neglect of the most effective activities: a mentor and an introduction to the departments the new employee will work with (HR Norway/Ennova, 2017). This was also the case with our informants. Our interpretation of the informants’ view on this is that these aspects of the shared leadership would have been easier to live with if the position had been more precisely defined. NIF (2014) has described the national federations’ core processes as recruiting, caring for and developing the members, especially the athletes. But instead of focusing on these core processes, most SGs experienced a loss of efficacy because of being a leader without sufficient time to shape the role alongside the other leaders: ‘As SG, I felt smaller and smaller. That I had to become something I was not!’, (SG 1) or, as another informant said it: ‘You feel inadequate. It’s a bad feeling over time.’ (SG 2) When asked about how aware the leadership were of the core tasks versus other tasks the federation had responsibilities for, a typical answer from the informants was: ‘It is a mess, but I think the debate is at its peak where emotions run high, whether it is a question of elite versus grassroots sports or priorities within elite sports.’ (SG 12) Another looked back with frustration at lost opportunities: ‘If I had more

resources and people who were more “hands-on”, there would have been greater opportunities to develop the organisation even further.’ (SG 3)

The need for a mentor is therefore clear to those of our informants who chose to leave their positions. The finding is in accordance with Corin and Cregård (2019) who point out that ‘the adequacy or inadequacy of supervisory support is a crucial factor in manager’ decisions to leave or remain’ (p. 169) and is strengthened by the contrast in our sample between those who left and those who remained. While the backgrounds of the SGs who left are diverse and often sport-related, the remaining SGs had each more than 15 years of experience in sports, which gave them an explicit self-confidence about their own status in Norwegian sport’ organisational work. These SGs are not necessarily better educated than those who left, but they have had the opportunity to learn the craft of sport leadership and management by practising it over time. If we add the size of the national federation as an influential factor, the smaller ones do not have the resources (finances, personnel or time) to go from managing the federation to developing it. Or as one informant put it: ‘There is only time for management and daily operations. That was not what I wanted to do. As Secretary General, I would like to help develop the federation in the right direction, but the only one you can delegate work tasks to is yourself’. (SG 3)

Push factor six: unhealthy gender attitudes

The sixth push factor related to the contextual impact from climate was unhealthy gender attitudes. Being a female SG came with additional challenges, according to one of the informants:

It was exhausting to be a woman, especially internationally. I have been invited into hotel rooms. Even in Norway, my thighs have been fondled. At leadership conventions in Norway, I never go alone. (SG 7)

This is alarming given the gender equality work that NIF and other actors in Norwegian sport have undertaken to improve the representation of women in management positions since the 1970s (Sogn, Skirstad & Strandbu, 2021). At the same time, our findings are indicative of what previous studies have shown of a general mismatch between numerical representation and cultural equality in organisations. Pfister and Radtke (2006, p. 124) point out that although German sports implemented gender equality programmes in the early 2000s, female leaders who left the position pointed to six non-

formal factors: 1) scepticism and suspicion of new ideas from experienced colleagues, 2) the withholding of information, 3) denial of women's experience and competence, 4) gender-specific barriers, 5) 'boys clubs' and lack of bonds between female leaders, and 6) power struggles, internal fights and condescending behaviour. More recently, Evans and Pfister (2021, p. 317) claim in their meta-study that despite political measures in Scandinavia to promote equality among top leaders, patriarchal language and gender stereotypes exist. We also found such tendencies among our informants. One of them exemplified it this way: 'As a woman, you had to shout twice as loud [as men]. That really got to me. There are too many old men in the organisation.' (SG 7)

Discussion

This study of voluntary turnover among Secretary Generals (SGs) in national federations in Norway has revealed a need for organisational self-examination, especially in smaller federations. In order to realise all the needs for change, modernisation and restructuring proposed by key actors in Norwegian sport (Strategiutvalget for norsk idrett, 2017; NIF, n.d.), as well as to satisfy external requirements for sport as a contributor to social prosperity, all of which we emphasised in the introduction to this article, there is no way around a renewal of the leadership role of the SGs. Ultimately, such a renewal is also important for the millions of members of various clubs and associations who are affected by the leadership cabal in Norwegian sport federations and the way they are governed in accordance with their mandate.

With the contemporary circumstances of national sport federations, leadership-as-practice, LAP, and 'work environment' as a contextual point of departure, the research question of why so many SGs quit their jobs was explored via Lee and Mitchell's unfolding theory (1994). The 'shocks' of working life that the theory emphasises, led the informants primarily to a decision reminiscent of script number 2, that is, the shock is so massive that the benefit of leaving becomes greater than of staying. However, our analysis shows that the causes and interpretation of the shocks vary. The reasons for leaving are a mix of both job characteristics, organisational conditions, environmental complexity and climate. Overall, six push factors were identified.

Table 2 *Six push factors*

<i>Push factors associated with external conditions</i>	<i>Push factors associated with internal conditions</i>
A discrepancy between the tasks that the SG role entails and the federation's resources to realise them	Different expectations when it came to basic onboarding
An experience of the board's role and board meetings as obstacles to the federation's innovation	A lack of support from the rest of the federation's leadership in developing the organisation
The relationship with the Presidents, which for many SGs, developed in a negative direction	Unhealthy gender attitudes

The common denominator for these six factors seems to be that weakening of job integration (Lee, Burch & Mitchell, 2014) is not to do with 'fit' or 'sacrifice', but with 'links' – the connection between employee" needs for relationships and actual relationships with others through a proper onboarding process. For example, push factors 1–3 are in line with the findings of Corin and Cregård (2019), who emphasise that the 'absence or presence of administrative support is an important factor influencing the leave or remain decisions of the studied operations managers' (p. 169). If we compare the situation of the SGs who have left their jobs with the experiences of the four SGs who haven't, the inefficiency of the cooperation seems to increase in inverse proportion to the size of the federation – that, the smaller the national federation, the less efficient its cooperation. In our view, the problems of cooperation arise because the role of SG is not differentiated proportionally to the complexity of the federation, while the board model is the same for everyone.

These push factors in table 2 and the emphasis on links are not unique to Norwegian sports. Previous studies show that turnover problems are rooted in the breach between expectations and realities. A thorough 'reality check' on day one can, according to studies that have made use of Lee and Mitchell's unfolding theory (1994), reduce the risk of turnover (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006, p. 72). Nevertheless, there are some special features of the national federations that may affect the SGs' turnovers. According to our informants, the leadership role as SG is often incorrectly dimensioned for the tasks it is expected to perform, or not positioned well enough internally in the federation to carry out what is expected of it. This relates to the vulnerable relationship with the President and the administrative resources of

the national federation, in addition to the context in which sports leadership is practised. Understanding the relationship between this context and the national federation's internal norms, routines and practices is not done overnight for a newly employed SG. Moreover, size matters. Compared with the SGs who left the job, the SGs in larger national federations had more sparring partners, fewer board meetings, more employees with special responsibilities and a perceived quality relationship with the board and especially the President. In contrast to SGs in smaller federations who had to do most of the work themselves, larger national federations also had a large network of people that they could draw upon actively. These SGs had someone to delegate to, someone to collaborate with, they could send dedicated employees to relevant NIF-initiated meetings, and their main task was to make the team work rather than juggling too many balls at the same time.

In line with critical leadership research and considering experiences with inadequate recruitment processes in Norwegian sports (Døvlé, 2017), we must consider alternative explanations as to why people leave. First, the SGs may use push factors as an excuse for leaving a job they did not want to continue in anyway, or they had been in far too long. But all our informants who left expressed a wish to stay, if circumstances had been different. And of those who did not leave, all had more than 15 years in the position. Second, we should examine the possibility that those employed in these positions may lack proper competence or experience. However, there is little about the background of our informants or what they said in the interviews that would indicate that that argument is decisive. Our data instead indicate that the explanation lies in a more complex everyday life for the SGs than the 'official' job description suggests. As many national federations are small organisations, the SG must also perform administrative tasks for the board, such as preparing documents for board meetings, keeping accounts, updating websites and developing educational measures (Skrudland, 2019). The recognition of this palette of responsibilities has practical consequences for the time aspect of the onboarding process and principles in a national federation. While several of the informants share a feeling of being expected to be up to speed from day one, several studies show that it takes around a year for leaders to really get into the job (Elsner & Farrand, 2012; Caldwell & Peters, 2018).

Conclusion

The academic implication of this study is that the relation between contextual influences and push factors should be made an integral part of the unfolding theory when it is used to investigate sport leadership and turnover. The context of national sport federations in the form of ‘climate’ and ‘environmental complexity’ (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013) impacts the working conditions of its leaders, and secondly shapes the perception of what the shocks consist of, and how these are interpreted into a decision framework that consists of combinations of script and image (Harman et al., 2007, p. 52). Our findings support and exemplify in sport what Raelin (2017) sees as the analytical strength of the LAP field, i.e., the importance of examining ‘leadership’s procedural dynamics, which occur *in situ* unfolding over time, and its mundane character that speaks to its occurrence in banal situations and interactions’ (p. 219).

Moreover, we argue that the convergence of push factors is conditioned by the national federations’ organisational design, culture and mandate. At the same time, the separate push factors are worth digging deeper into because shocks can impact people’s decisions differently. Push factors can intertwine and amplify dissatisfaction, as one push factor (such as a toxic relationship with the President) can be deduced from another (such as lack of clarification of expectations) instead of from the shock that started the process in the first place (the absence of good onboarding processes). For SGs, the shared leadership practice with presidents is an example of why the limitations and possibilities of the decision-making framework must be revised. For organisations where shared leadership is practised, creating a good environment for collaboration requires respect and trust for each other, complementary competence, role clarity and, not least, good personal chemistry (Zhu et al., 2018).

The practical implication from this study is a set of key pointers which can be used to devise a retention strategy (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Most notably, the manoeuvring space of the SGs according to our informants rarely corresponds either culturally or structurally with the assignment they have been given. For research on sport leadership in general and national federations in particular, we believe that the findings suggest further research on the significance of onboarding processes in addition to assessing organisational changes to create a better match between the SGs’ mandate and the opportunity to actually realise it.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the anonymous reviewers for constructive feedback and to Tom Karp and Mari Svendsen for valuable input on the article.

References

- Agenda/PricewaterhouseCoopers (2010). *Styrket toppledelse i kommunene. Råd-menn, turnover og likestilling*. En rapport på oppdrag fra KS. [Strengthening top management in municipalities. Chief public officers, turnover, and equality. A report commissioned by KS]. Available at <https://www.ks.no/contentassets/8fd587deea084b1bb70d8b523719e8d4/rappport-toppledere.pdf>
- Allen, D.G., Hancock, J.I., Vardaman, J.M. & McKee, D.N. (2014). Analytical Mindsets in Turnover Research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(1), 61–86, doi:10.1002/job.1912
- Andrus, J.L., Withers, M.C., Courtright, S.H. & Boivie, S. (2019). Go your own way: Exploring the causes of top executive turnover. *Strategic Management Journal*, 40(7), 1151–1168, <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3020>
- Arnoux-Nicolas, C., Sovet, L., Lhotellier, L., Di Fabio, A. & Bernaud, J-L. (2016). Perceived Work Conditions and Turnover Intentions: The Mediating Role of Meaning of Work. *Frontiers in Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00704>
- Beach, L. R. & Mitchell, T. R. (1987). Image Theory: Principles, goals, and plans in decision making. *Acta Psychologica*, 66(3), 201–220. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-6918\(87\)90034-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-6918(87)90034-5)
- Bennis. W.G., & Nanus. B. (1985). *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*. Harper & Row.
- Bryant, P. C. & Allen, D. G. (2013). Compensation, Benefits and Employee Turnover: HR Strategies for Retaining Top Talent. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 45(3), 171–175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886368713494342>
- Burton, L.J, Kane, G.M. & Borland, J.F. (2019). *Sport Leadership in the 2^{1st} Century* (2nd ed). Jones & Bartlett.
- Caldwell, C. & Peters, R. (2018). New employee onboarding – psychological contracts and ethical perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 37(1), 27–39. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-10-2016-0202>
- Chappelet, J-L. (2018). Beyond governance: the need to improve the regulation of international sport. *Sport in Society*, 21(5), 724–734, DOI: 10.1080/17430437.2018.1401355
- Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(3), 474–494, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1589>
- Choi, Y. & Park, N.K. (2020). Examining the pull, the push, and their simultaneous effects on managerial turnover. *Management Decision*, 58(12), 2639–2654. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-06-2019-0822>

- Clingermayer, J.C. (2016). Turnover at the Top: Causes and Consequences of Leadership Change in Public Agencies. In A. Farazmand (ed), *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*. Springer, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31816-5_1863-1
- Cohen, G., Blake, R.S. & Goodman, D. (2016). Does Turnover Intention Matter? Evaluating the Usefulness of Turnover Intention Rate as a Predictor of Actual Turnover Rate. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 36(3), 240–263, doi:10.1177/0734371X15581850
- Corbin Dwyer, S. & Buckle, J.L. (2009). The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690900800105>
- Corin, L., Berntson, E. & Härenstam, A. (2016). Managers' Turnover in the Public Sector—The Role of Psychosocial Working Conditions. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 39(10), 790–802. doi:10.1080/01900692.2015.1035786
- Cregård, A., Corin, L. & Skagert, K. (2017). Voluntary Turnover Among Public Sector Managers: A Review. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 21, 89–114.
- Cregård, A. & Corin, L. (2019). Public sector managers: the decision to leave or remain in a job. *Human Resource Development International*, 22, 158–176, DOI:10.1080/13678868.2018.156374
- Crevani, L., Lindgren, M. & Packendorff, J. (2010). Leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 26, 77–86, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2009.12.003>
- Crevani, L. & Endrissat, N. (2016). Mapping the Leadership-as-practice terrain: Comparative elements. In J. Raelin (ed), *Leadership-as-Practice. Theory and Application* (pp. 21–49). Routledge.
- Czarniawska, B. (2007). Narrative Inquiry in and about Organizations. In D.J. Clandinin (ed), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (pp. 383–404). Sage.
- Dale-Olsen, H. (2016). Gjennomtrekk av ansatte over tid: Ulike trender i forskjellige næringer? [A longitudinal study of employee turnover: Various trends in different sectors?] *Søkelys på arbeidslivet*, 1-2(33), 85–100, <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1504-7989-2016-01-02-05>
- Donnelly, D.P. & Quirin, J.J. (2006). An extension of Lee and Mitchell's unfolding model of voluntary turnover. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(1), 59–77, <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.367>
- Dysvik, A. & Kuvaas, B. (2010). Exploring the relative and combined influence of mastery-approach goals and work intrinsic motivation on employee turnover intention, *Personnel Review*, 39(5), 622 – 638, doi: 10.1108/00483481011064172
- Dysvik, A. & Kuvaas, B. (2013). Perceived job autonomy and turnover intention: The moderating role of perceived supervisor support. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 22(5), 563–573, DOI: 10.1080/1359432X.2012.667215
- Døvre, C. (2017). Stort gjennomtrekk av ledere i golfklubber: – Trist at vi ikke tar bedre vare på kompetansen i Golf-Norge [Major turnover among leaders in Norwegian golf clubs: – It is sad that we don't value the competence in Norwegian golf]. *norskogolf.no*, 30 May. <https://www.norskogolf.no/nyheter/stort-gjennomtrekk-av-ledere-golfklubber-trist-vi-ikke-tar-bedre-vare-pa/>

- Elsner, R. & Farrand, B. (2012). *Leadership transitions. How business leaders take charge in new roles*. Kogan Page Ltd.
- Evans, A.B., Blackwell, J., Dolan, P., Fahlén, J., Hoekman, R., Lenneis, V., McNarry, G., Smith, M. & Wilcock, L. (2020). Sport in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic: towards an agenda for research in the sociology of sport. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 17(2), 85-95, DOI: 10.1080/16138171.2020.1765100
- Evans, A.B. & Pfister, G.U. (2021). Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative review. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 56(3), 317-342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690220911842>
- Perkins, L., Skinner, J. & Swanson, S. (2018). Sport Leadership: A New Generation of Thinking, *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(2), 77-81. <https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/jsm/32/2/article-p77.xml>
- Geeraert, A. (2019). The limits and opportunities of self-regulation: achieving international sport federations' compliance with good governance standards. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 19(4), 520-538, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2018.1549577
- Harman, W. S., Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., Felps, W. & Owens, B. P. (2007). The Psychology of Voluntary Employee Turnover. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16(1), 51-54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00474.x>
- Holtom, B.C., Mitchell, T.R., Lee, T.W. & Inderrieden, E.J. (2005). Shocks as causes of turnover: What they are and how organizations can manage them. *Human Resource Management*, 44(3), 337-352, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20074>
- Hom, P.W. Allen, D.G. & Griffith, R.W. (2019). Theories of Employee Turnover. In P.W. Hom, D.G. Allen & R.W. Griffith (eds), *Employee Retention and Turnover. Why Employees Stay and Leave* (pp. 72-121). Routledge.
- Hom, P.W., Lee, T.W., Shaw, J.D. & Hausknecht, J.P. (2017). One Hundred Years of Employee Turnover Theory and Research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 530-545. doi:10.1037/apl0000103.
- Hovden, J. (2010). Female top leaders – prisoners of gender? The gendering of leadership discourses in Norwegian sports organizations. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 2, 189-203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2010.488065>
- HR Norge/Ennova (2017). *Global Employee and Leadership Index. Norge 2017*. Available at <http://ipaper.ipapercms.dk/Ennova/gelx-2017-no/?page=1>
- Jin, M. H., McDonald, B. & Park, J. (2018). Person-Organization Fit and Turnover Intention: Exploring the Mediating Role of Employee Followership and Job Satisfaction Through Conservation of Resources Theory. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 38(2), 167-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X16658334>
- Knudsen, H. K., Ducharme, L. J. & Roman, P. M. (2009). Turnover intention and emotional exhaustion 'at the top': Adapting the job demands-resources model to leaders of addiction treatment organizations. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 14(1), 84-95. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013822>
- Kuvaas, B. (2019). Individuell prestasjonsbasert belønning, motivasjon og prestasjoner [Individual performance-based rewards, motivation, and performances]. *Magma*, 2, 40-45, <https://www.magma.no/individuell-prestasjonsbasert-beloning-motivasjon-og-prestasjoner>

- Kulik, C.T., Treuren, G. & Bordia, P. (2012). Shocks and final straws: Using exit-interview data to examine the unfolding model's decision paths. *Human Resource Management*, 51(1), 25-46, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20466>
- Kulturdepartementet (2021). *Sterkere tilbake – En mer inkluderende idrett* [A stronger recovery – A more inclusive sport]. The Norwegian Ministry of Culture. Available at <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/7f819b4ef66e4e559476ec9b235b6a96/regjeringens-idrettsstrategi-nett.pdf>
- Kyndt, E., Dochy, F., Michielsen, M. & Moeyaert, B. (2009). Employee Retention: Organisational and Personal Perspectives. *Vocations and Learning* 2, 195-215, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-009-9024-7>
- Lambert, E.G. (2001). To Stay or Quit: A Review of the Literature on Correctional Staff Turnover. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 26(1), 61-76, doi:10.1007/BF02886857.
- Laulié, L. & Morgeson, F.P. (2021). The end is just the beginning: Turnover events and their impact on those who remain. *Personnel Psychology*, 74(3), 387-409, <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12422>
- Lee, T.W. & Mitchell, T.R. (1994). An Alternative Approach: The Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 19(1), 51-89, <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1994.9410122008>
- Lee, T.W., Burch, T.C. & Mitchell, T.R. (2014). The Story of Why We Stay: A Review of Job Embeddedness. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), 199-216, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091244>
- Lee, T.W., Hom, P.W., Eberly, M.B., Li, J. & Mitchell, T.R. (2017). On the next decade of research in voluntary employee turnover. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 31, 201-221. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2016.0123>
- Lee, Y.H. & Chelladurai, P. (2018). Emotional intelligence, emotional labor, coach burnout, job satisfaction, and turnover intention in sport leadership. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 18(4), 393-412, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2017.1406971
- Lesjø, J.H. (2009). *Idretts sosiologi. Sportens ekspansjon i det moderne samfunn* [Sport sociology. The expansion of sport in modern society]. Abstrakt.
- Lindholm, J. (2022). How Russia's invasion of Ukraine shook sports' foundation. *International Sports Law Journal*, 22, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40318-022-00211-8>
- Malloy, E.S. & Kavussanu, M. (2021). A comparison of authentic and transformational leadership in sport. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 51(7), 636-646, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12769>
- NIF (n.d.) *Moderniseringsprosjektet* [The Modernization Project]. Available at <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/tema/moderniseringsprosjektet/>
- NIF (2014). *Idrettspolitisk dokument 2015-2019* [Sport-political Document 2015-2019]. Available at https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/siteassets/idrettsforbundet/tema/om-nif/idrettspolitisk-dokument-2015-2019/57_15_nif_idrettspolitisk-dokument-2015-2019_lr_0909.pdf
- NIF (2019a). *Idretten vil! 2019-2023. Langtidsplan for norsk idrett*. [Sport wants it! 2019-2023 – Long-term Plan for Norwegian Sport]. Available at <https://www>

- idrettsforbundet.no/contentassets/8149372c5d4d439cb1b34fc1625032f0/idretten-vil_langtidsplan-for-norsk-idrett-2019-2023_lr.pdf
- NIF (2019b). *Idretten skal! 2019-2023. Strategiske satsningsområder*. [Sport shall do it! 2019-2023 – Strategic Priority Areas]. Available at https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/contentassets/ed1d788edca540e682b5a296836b22f8/130_19_nif_strategiske-satsingsomrader-2019-2023.pdf
- NIF (2021). For Særforbund [For National Federations]. Available at <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/tema/juss/lovnormer/for-sarforbund/>
- NIF (2022). *Organisering* [Organization]. Available at <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/om-nif/organisering/>
- Norling, L.R. & Chopik, W.J. (2020). The Association Between Coworker Support and Work-Family Interference: A Test of Work Environment and Burnout as Mediators. *Frontiers in Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00819>
- Nyberg, A. & Ployhart, R. (2013). Context-Emergent Turnover (CET) Theory: A Theory of Collective Turnover. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(1), 109-131. [10.5465/amr.2011.0201](https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.0201)
- Pfister, G. & Radtke, S. (2006). Dropping Out: Why Male and Female Leaders in German Sports Federations Break Off Their Careers. *Sport Management Review*, 9(2), 111-139, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(06\)70022-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(06)70022-5)
- Porter, C.M. & Rigby, J.R. (2021). The turnover contagion process: An integrative review of theoretical and empirical research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(2), 212-228, <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2483>
- Raelin, J. (2011). From leadership-as-practice to leaderful practice. *Leadership*, 7(2), 195-211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715010394808>
- Raelin, J.A. (2017). Leadership-as-practice: Theory and application – An editor's reflection. *Leadership*, 13(2), 215-221, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715017702273>
- Schaillée, H., Derom, I., Solenes, O., Straume, S., Burgess, B. Jones, V. & Renfree, G. (2021). Gender inequality in sport: perceptions and experiences of generation Z. *Sport, Education and Society*, DOI: 10.1080/13573322.2021.1932454
- Shapiro, D.L., Hom, P., Shen, W. & Agarwal, R. (2016). How do leader departures affect subordinates' organizational attachment? A 360-degree relational perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 41, 479-502. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2014.0233>
- Shaw, J.D. (2011). Turnover rates and organizational performance: Review, critique, and research agenda. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 1(3), 779-804. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070209505000410>
- Sogn, H., Skirstad, B. & Strandbu, Å. (2021). Ytre press, indre driv? En analyse av Norges idrettsforbunds arbeid med å endre kjønnsbalansen i organisasjonen (1971-2020) [External pressure, inner motivation? An Analysis of the Norwegian Confederation of Sport's efforts to change the gender balance in the organization (1971-2020)]. In A. Tjønnedal (ed), *Idrett, kjønn og ledelse* [Sport, gender, and leadership] (pp 245-263). Fagbokforlaget
- Skrudland, O. (2019). *Idrettens generalsekretærer – hvem er de?* [The Secretary Generals of Sport – who are they?] MA thesis, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo.

- Smith, B. & McGannon, K.R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11(1), 101-121, DOI: 10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357
- SSB (2020). *Kortvarige arbeidsforhold. Hvem bytter jobb etter å ha vært i jobben ett år eller mindre?* [Short-term employments. Who changes jobs after being in it a year or less?] Rapport 2020:12. Available at https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/415406?_ts=170f1b89210
- Stenling, C., Fahlén, J., Strittmatter, A.-M., & Skille, E. Å. (2023). The meaning of democracy in an era of good governance: Views of representation and their implications for board composition. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 58(1), 108-125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902221088127>
- Stewart, A.J. & Diebold, J. (2017). Turnover at the Top: Investigating Performance-Turnover Sensitivity among Nonprofit Organizations. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 40(4), 741-764, DOI: 10.1080/15309576.2017.1340900
- Strategiutvalget for norsk idrett (2017). *Den norske idrettsmodellen inn i en ny tid*. [The Norwegian Model of Sport into a New Era]. Available at [https://assets.website-files.com/5e32b0c051fd9e64f3632ed6/5f36803ec946a4ac8ad5c541_Strategiutvalget%20for%20idrett_%20Statlig%20idrettspolitik%20inn%20i%20en%20ny%20tid%20\(delrapport%20%2C%202017\).PDF](https://assets.website-files.com/5e32b0c051fd9e64f3632ed6/5f36803ec946a4ac8ad5c541_Strategiutvalget%20for%20idrett_%20Statlig%20idrettspolitik%20inn%20i%20en%20ny%20tid%20(delrapport%20%2C%202017).PDF)
- Swanson, S. & Welty Peachey, J. (2022). An agenda for future leadership research in sport management: explorations, considerations, and challenges. In D. Shilbury (ed), *A Research Agenda for Sport Management* (pp. 95-112). Edward Elgar.
- Wells, J.E. & Welty Peachey, J. (2011). Turnover intentions: Do leadership behaviors and satisfaction with the leader matter? *Team Performance Management*, 17, 23-40. doi:10.1108/13527591111114693
- Wu, Q. & Cormican, K. (2021). Shared Leadership and Team Effectiveness: An Investigation of Whether and When in Engineering Design Teams. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 569198. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.569198>
- Zhu, J., Liao, Z., Yam, K.C. & Johnson, R.E. (2018). Shared leadership: A state-of-the-art review and future research agenda. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(7), 834-852. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2296>

