



EVALUATION OF THE EFQM EXCELLENCE MODEL IN MEGA SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract:

The application of the EFQM excellence model and the adoption of its principles enables sports organizations to achieve significant results, that will satisfy both customers and employees. Although many companies and organizations apply the EFQM excellence model, few mega sports organizations have adopted its application. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess if employees of mega sports organizations applied the processes of the EFQM excellence model and if there are differences between sexes. One hundred and forty-six employees at the Olympic Athletic Center of Athens "Spiros Louis", who agreed to take part in the study were asked to rate the nine criteria (Leadership, Human resources, Strategy and Policy, Suppliers/Sponsors/Resources, Processes, People outcomes, Customer outcomes, Results for the Society and Key performance results), of the "Administrative Excellence of Greek Sports Organizations" questionnaire (Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos, 2014). The statistical tests used to analyze the data were: a) descriptive statistics, b) the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (for the normality of the dependent variables), c) the Cronbach reliability coefficient "a" (for the reliability of the scale) and d) the Kruskal-Wallis (to compare the average values of men and women). After the analysis of the data, the following were found: a) the internal consistency of the scale was 0.90, b) the Leadership criterion (4.23±0.70) had the lowest score and the Key performance results (2.83±0.95) had the highest score, c) it was observed a statistically significant difference between men and women only in criterion 5 Procedures (chi square=5.14, p<0.023). It is concluded that according to the estimates of the employees (men and women) at the Athens Olympic Sports Center "Spiros Louis" there is an attempt to apply some principles of the EFQM excellence model. Also, women had a more positive assessment than men in the Procedure criterion.

Keywords: total quality management, business excellence, sports organizations, EFQM model

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1. Introduction

"Business excellence is the way of working that enables an organization to achieve a balanced satisfaction of customers, employees, stakeholders, and society, in order to increase the likelihood of long-term success" (EFQM, 2020).

The European Foundation for Quality Management established in 1988 with the support of the European Commission, aims to improve the competitiveness of European organizations and promote continued business excellence. It achieves this with the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM, 2020).

The EFQM consists of nine criteria. The five of them: Leadership, Human Resources, Strategy and Policy, Suppliers / Sponsors / Resources, and Procedures are the set of enablers, while the other four: People outcomes, Customer outcomes, Results for the Society and Key performance results, are the set of the results (E.F.Q.M., 2019; 2021).

2. Review of Literature

Alanasari, Sallaoui, and Souissi (2018) evaluated the quality management in a sports club in Dubai by using the EFQM Excellence Model framework. Their results showed that the management was supporting and encouraging programs for promoting quality concepts and applications. The employees were committed to implementing projects and took the initiative to develop the quality system. Those indicate that today's management of football clubs and companies seek to implement quality concepts so that can raise the levels of their employees, boost their productivity, and get the best results.

Faraji and Poursoltani (2012) evaluated the performance of the physical education (P.E.) general office of Tehran province through a model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). Eighty subjects participated in their study and completed the EFQM Excellence Model. The results showed the highest score was gained in key performance results and the lowest was gained in people results. The authors noticed that according to the scores gained in the criteria, improving measures in all criteria is essential for this organization, especially in the people criterion from enablers and people results criterion from the domain of the result. Also, it is believed that the physical education area is one of the best fields for the application of the excellence model towards performance excellence and gaining better results and hence, it seems that the model has a high potential in responding to problems commonly seen in the sports sector.

Another study conducted by Ghreeb, Abdelkader, and Sayyd (2021) identified the level of institutional excellence in the Egyptian and Saudi football Federations in view of the dimensions of the European Excellence Model EFQM. The results of this study showed that there were statistically significant differences between the averages of the answers about each of the Egyptian Football Association and the Saudi Football Federation in the application of the dimensions of the European Excellence Model EFQM and the overall degree of application of the dimensions of the European Excellence Model EFQM in favor of the Saudi Football Association. It is also evident that there are no

statistically significant differences between the average answers about both the Egyptian Football Association and the Saud Football Federation.

Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos, and Theodorakis (2014) assessed the Hellenic National Sports Federations' (HNSFs) organizational-managerial operations and their readiness degree for the application of Management Excellence's processes, according to the European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model. In the study participated one hundred subjects employed in 18 HNSFs. The results of their study showed that processes of management excellence do exist and are indeed applied, but neither often, nor systematically. Also, the results showed that there was a differentiation in perceptions between the three hierarchical administrative groups. The authors concluded that a management excellence program may prove difficult to be applied in the HNSFs.

Matsaggidis and Gargalianos (2017) investigated the level of maturity of Total Quality Management in Hellenic National Sports Federations (HNSF) using the EFQM model. Data for the present study was collected through a structured questionnaire from HNSF's Board members. The results showed that the HNSFs implement some of the management practices suggested by the EFQM; nevertheless, more effort is required for them to claim that EFQM is systematically implemented. Data were collected from 86 responders, who were employed in HNSF and answered a validated questionnaire. According to the results of their study, the highest score was achieved by Processes and Leadership (4,40/5), followed by Policy and Strategy, while Human Resources and Partnership Resources scored below 4 but both of them were over 3,9 points. The authors concluded that the HNSFs achieved average-high scores in the "results".

3. Material and Methods

During this descriptive investigation, a total of 174 people were working at the Athens Olympic Athletic Center "Spiros Louis". First, the researcher contacted the Managers, Directors, and Board Members of the mentioned Athletic Center and gave them all info about the purpose of this study and the possibility to submit a research scale to all employees for completion. She also gave them details about the time required to complete the scale and noticed that the research tool is anonymous and that the results will be used for scientific purposes. Then, the Directors informed the heads of all existing departments and offices about the conduct of the study. The latter informed the employees about the possibility of participating in the study by completing a scale and scheduling the investigator's arrival hours at their workplace. In the same way, the secretaries of the administration, the board, the president, and the vice president were informed. The collection of questionnaires from the employees working at the Athens Olympic Athletic Center, "Spiros Louis", took place over a period of 16 months. At the end of this period, 146 questionnaires were completed (rate 80, 66 %). A response rate of 50% to 60% can be considered satisfactory for the purposes, analysis, and evaluation of the conclusions of a survey (Rea and Parker, 1997).

The collection of the data for this study was conducted with the EFQM scale validated by Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos, and Theodorakis (2014). These researchers permitted the Ph.D. candidate of the present study to modify their scale, and after this procedure, it has been tested for its reliability and validity, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

After the questionnaires collecting, all the data were coded and entered into a personal computer in the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 28), program for further analysis. Since the data did not follow a normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and Mann-Whitney U test were used for the analysis (Creswell, 2018; Robson, 2016).

4. Results and Discussion

Eighty-five of 146 subjects, working at the Athens Athletic Center "Spiros Louis", who participated in the present study were men and sixty-one women. Two were lower than thirty years of age, forty-six forty to forty-nine years, and the remaining ninety-eight over fifty years. More details about the demographic characteristics of the employees are presented in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the validity and reliability of the scale. The results showed that the scale had a high level of reliability ($\alpha = 0,90$), while the corresponding scores for the 9 criteria ranged from 0.79 to 0.93, (Creswell, 2018). This information is presented in Table 2.

According to the results, the employees showed: 1. Positive perception for the application of items that were included in the criteria Leadership, Human resources, and Policy and Strategy. 2. Neutral perception for the application of items which were included in the criteria Suppliers-Sponsors-Resources, Processes and People Results and 3. Nonpositive perception for the application of items, which were included in the criteria Customer Results, Results for the Society, and Key Performance Results. (Table 3).

A comparison of 9 criteria between the two sexes (Kruskal Wallis Test), revealed a significant difference in criterion 5 (Processes, Chi-Square=5.141, $p < 0,023$, Table 4).

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of the study subjects

	N	%
Sex		
Men	85	58,20
Women	61	41,80
Age (years)		
<30	2	1,3
40-49	46	31,5
>50	98	67,2
Employment years		
<30	12	17,5
40-49	55	37,7
>50	79	44,8
Duty position		
Board members	12	17,5

Directors/managers	30	20,5
Employee	104	62,0
Education level		
MA, PhD	4	2,7
Higher education diploma	57	39,0
Secondary education (Gymnasion, in Greek)	85	58,3
Attention of management seminars		
Yes	70	47,9
No	76	52,1
Employment relationship		
Permanent staff	132	90,4
Contractual employee	14	9,6

Table 2: Reliability of the scale criteria (Cronbach's a)

Criteria EFQM	Cronbach's	Number of items
Leadership	0,84	6
Human resources	0,93	8
Policy and strategy	0,88	10
Suppliers-Sponsors-Resources	0,92	7
Processes	0,79	9
People results	0,84	9
Customer results	0,87	6
Society results	0,92	8
Key performance results	0,86	7

Table 3: Descriptive characteristics of the EFQM criteria

EFQM criteria	N	Min	Max	Mean
Leadership	146	2,33	5,00	4,2295
Human resources	146	1,44	4,78	3,9467
Policy and strategy	146	1,56	4,89	3,6804
Suppliers-Sponsors-Resources	146	1,00	5,00	3,6276
Processes	146	1,00	5,00	3,5930
People results	146	2,10	4,40	3,2322
Customer results	146	1,17	4,50	3,1849
Society results	146	1,00	5,00	2,9221
Key performance results	146	1,00	5,00	2,8268

Table 4: Comparison of criteria between two sexes

Test Statistics ^{a,b}									
	CRIT 1	CRIT 2	CRIT 3	CRIT 4	CRIT 5	CRIT 6	CRIT 7	CRIT 8	CRIT 9
Chi-Square	,439	3,431	,903	2,956	5,141	3,070	,098	,995	,627
df	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	,508	,064	,342	,086	,023	,080	,754	,319	,429
a. Kruskal Wallis Test									
b. Grouping Variable: sex									

The aim of this study was to assess the application of the EFQM excellence model in mega sports organizations, such as the Athens Athletic Center "Spiros Louis", where 175 employees are working.

According to our results principles of total quality management of EFQM, excellence model is applied in mega sports organizations, but not systematically. The high rate of the score in the criteria Leadership, Human Resources, and Policy and Strategy showed that some processes are applied systematically. However, the same does not happen with the other criteria of the EFQM excellence model like People Results, Customers Results, Results for the Society, and Key Performance Results. Also, we found that the average score of the Leadership criterion is in accordance with already published studies conducted in sports organizations. The same mean score was observed in the study of Matsaggidis and Gargalianos (2017) which was conducted on employees in Greek Federations (4.40 ± 0.81). A similar high score on the Leadership criterion (4.20 ± 0.68) was recorded in the research of Martinez-Moreno and Suarez (2016). Also, Faraji, Sani, and Poursoltani (2012), in another study found that the items of the criterion Leadership scored 36.48%, a very high percentage, compared to the other criteria. Also, in a study conducted by Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos, and Theodorakis (2014), the score of the Leadership criterion was 3.28 ± 1.22 . In contrast to a study by Ghreeb, Abdelkader, and Sayyd (2021), conducted in the Federations of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the scores recorded by the subjects in their study were 1.80 ± 0.24 and 2.41 ± 0.31 , respectively.

No study is known to us to compare the criteria of the EFQM model between sexes in Mega sports organizations and it is difficult to confirm our results.

It is concluded that men and women employed at the Olympic Athletic Center "Spiros Louis", showed a satisfactory level of implementation of total quality management of the EFQM. Also, women had a more positive assessment than men in the Processes criterion.

Future research should focus on all management levels of the Mega sports organizations and maybe compare the difference in the variables such as duty position or management styles.

5. Recommendations

The management and functioning of Mega sports organizations should not have relied only on the decisions of its board members, which have not had a relationship with a structured and workable model of quality management processes. Since the application of the EFQM excellence model cannot be applied to a large number of workers, board members can cooperate with the other management members such as directors and managers of different departments in order to organize employees' empowerment group actions.

6. Conclusion

It is concluded that according to perceptions of employees of the Athens Athletic Center "Spiros Louis" (men and women), there is an attempt to apply the rules of the criteria of the EFQM excellence model mainly based on the principles of total quality management

(high score in Leadership and Procedures) and less on the other criteria. Also, women had a more positive assessment than men in the Procedure criterion.

Future research should focus on differences between board members, directors, managers, and other employees of Mega sports organizations in order to plan more comprehensive criteria for the EFQM excellence model.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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